Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta

Technical Report

Prepared for
The Northern Alberta Development Council
Alberta Education
Northland School Division

By HLA Consultants

June, 1984

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS
IN NORTHERN ALBERTA

TECHNICAL REPORT

PREPARED FOR:

THE NORTHERN ALBERTA
DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL,
ALBERTA EDUCATION,
NORTHLAND SCHOOL
DIVISION

BY: HLA CONSULTANTS
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June, 1984

The Honorable Norman Weiss, M.L.A.,
Chairman, Northern Alberta Development Council,
Alberta Tourism and Small Business,
2nd Floor, Provincial Building,
9621 - 96 Avenue,
Postal Bag 900-14,
PEACE RIVER, Alberta
TOH 2X0

Dear Mr. Weiss:

We have the pleasure of transmitting to you this report entitled, "Early School Leavers in Northern Alberta". This study was done in accordance with the terms of reference set out in the spring of 1983.

The purpose of the study was to identify the magnitude of the early school leaver problem, the characteristics of the leaver, and to develop practical mitigative measures that would encourage students to stay in school longer.

The process we utilized was one of direct personal contact with leavers, students now in school, parents and educators. We also held two series of workshops with educators throughout northern Alberta. The first, at the beginning of the study, was to define the magnitude of the problem and discuss the characteristics of the leaver. The second, at the study end, confirmed the practicality and priority of the mitigative measures.

From an analysis of the early leaver problem it is apparent that much can be done to help students stay in school longer. Recommended mitigative measures are presented in the report. Most of the measures, if well implemented, do not require major financial outlay. They require, however, a strong initiative on the part of all parties concerned: teachers, school administrators, school district personnel, parents, the provincial government, and the community at large.

This report marks the conclusion of this study. However, we trust it will also mark the beginning of initiatives that will address the early school leaver problem in northern Alberta.

Respectfully yours,

HLA CONSULTANTS

Roger Lefrançois

Roger Lefrancois
Principal

210 Capilano Mall, 5004 - 98 Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta T6A 0A1 - Telephone 468-6840

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INDEX OF VOLUMES

Summary Report:
- Brief process and methodology description;
- detailed presentation of recommended mitigative measures and supporting rationale.

Technical Report :
- Detailed presentation of recommended mitigative measures and supporting rationale;
- detailed discussion of study methodology, study data and analysis;
- all of the appendices including the literature review.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is the product of the efforts of many people whose active cooperation and constructive efforts resulted in this comprehensive examination of the early school leaver. Their cooperation is very much appreciated.

In particular we acknowledge the many people whom we formally interviewed and many others with whom we had extensive discussions regarding early leavers. These include:

- people who are early school leavers;
- parents of early leavers;
- students in school;
- representatives of community organizations and agencies;
- school staff; and
- school system central office staff.

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We especially thank the staff of the following schools for scheduling interviews, and allowing us to spend time interviewing students, staff and parents from their schools and community:

- Grande Prairie Composite High School
- Montrose Junior High (Grande Prairie)
- Cadotte Lake School
- Fox Lake School
- Fort Vermilion Public School
- La Crete Public School
- Rainbow Lake School
- Desmarais School
- Chipewyan Lakes School
- Lac La Biche Public High School

- Plamondon School
- Fort McMurray Composite High School
- Peter Pond Junior High School (Fort McMurray)
- Birchwood Junior High School (Fort McMurray)
- Bonnyville Centralized High School
- Cold Lake Separate School

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- Lakeland Roman Catholic School District
- Fort McMurray Public School District
- Lac La Biche School Division
- Northland School Division
- Fort Vermilion School Division
- Grande Prairie Public School District

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- Alberta Education
- Alberta Advanced Education
- University of Alberta, Faculty of Education
- Alberta School Trustees' Association
- Alberta Teachers' Association

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- Charles Vincent, Chairman, Lakeland Roman Catholic School District
- Dave Young, Assistant Superintendent, Fort McMurray Public School District
- Ernie Sehn, Chairman, Lac La Biche School Division
- Harry Sherk, Planning Services, Alberta Education (Alternate: Wesley Eddy)
- Andy Hendry, Field Services Division, Alberta Advanced Education

- Ted West, Superintendent, Fort Vermilion School Division
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- Bea Neumeier, Supervisor of Programs, Northland School Division
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I STUDY RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the recommendations arising from a study on early school leaving in northern Alberta. These recommendations consist of mitigative measures which educators, agencies, and community members may utilize in addressing the early school leaver problem.

Several major issues of concern were identified in the study. In section 1.2 these issues are presented in order of priority, reflecting their relative importance with respect to the early school leaver problem. The ranking of the issues was established on the basis of the study data, a literature review, and an assessment provided by educators who attended early school leaver workshops (Workshop II).

Some of the issues are more relevant to certain regions of northern Alberta than to others. Since remote and isolated areas are considered to be characteristically different from other regions of the north, some issues faced by them may be more severe than in other areas. Those issues which are particularly applicable to remote and isolated areas are grouped together at the end of the listing in section 1.2

For each of these issues, specific mitigative measures aimed at reducing early leaver rates were developed. These are presented in detail in section 1.3. The supporting rationale for each recommended measure is also outlined.

The final section of the chapter is a presentation of two implementation models. The recommended mitigative measures are grouped according to area of responsibility for implementation. The first model outlines an action plan for schools, school jurisdictions, and communities, while the second model focuses on recommendations for central and government agencies.

1.2 Priority listing of issues

i) The Student at Risk: this focuses on the identification of the student who is the potential early school leaver, and the need for intervention programs.

ii) Awareness of the Early School Leaver Problem: to effectively solve this problem it is first necessary to become aware of its characteristics and the role that various people can play in encouraging students to stay in school longer.

iii) Student-Teacher Relationships: the ways in which teachers and students relate to one another are very important in influencing students' attitudes toward school.

iv) Recognizing the Value of and Need for Education: while in school, students may not be fully aware of the importance of education. What can be done to increase this awareness?

v) Community/School Involvement: the relationship which the parents and community have with the school is important in shaping attitudes towards education.

vi) Student Involvement: student involvement in activities outside of the classroom is important in creating a sense of belonging and encouraging students to stay in school.

vii) Relevance of Education: how well can students relate to the courses which are being taught? Does the content have meaning for them in their environment?

viii) Education After Dropping Out: some students wish to return to school at some point after they have left. How can this be made easier for them?

ix) Busing Alternatives: long bus rides affect the performance of students and may discourage them from staying in school. Alternatives to long bus rides should be considered.

The following issues are particularly applicable to remote and isolated areas:

x) Teaching System: involves a consideration of the approach to education, including a philosophy of education for communities, continuous progress and pre-school programs.

xi) High Teacher Turnover Rates: teachers in the north tend to stay in their communities for a much shorter time than teachers elsewhere.

xii) Teacher Preparation: How well are teachers prepared for the experience of living and teaching in northern communities?

xiii) Education Alternatives For Remote Communities: What are the alternatives to no school at all in smaller centres?

1.3 Presentation of recommended mitigative measures

The following is a presentation of specific measures which may be developed to help students stay in school longer. The recommended measures are grouped under each of the issues that have been outlined above. The measures designated with an asterisk (*) are considered to be of highest priority on the basis of their potential effectiveness and impact in reducing the number of early school leavers. The priority of the individual mitigative measures was determined through an evaluation completed by educators, and through the researchers' general assessment of the field work and study findings.

1.3.1 The student at risk

Goal: The student at risk is the critical element in an early school leaver mitigation program. Action plans for dealing with the potential early school leaver should be developed.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

1.A Dealing with the potential early leaver (*)

A planned, consistent strategy should be developed to deal with the potential dropout (i.e. student at risk). This approach should reflect a local needs assessment and recognize the unique environments and capabilities of each locality and school. An action plan for developing such an approach is presented in the final section of this chapter.

1.B Living Skills Program

Recognizing that there are at-risk students who will likely become early leavers, non-academic program options should be developed to provide better preparation for the future. Living skills courses, in combination with work-study programs, may be very effective in providing the student with a good orientation to life outside the school.

1.C Transfer to A.V.C.s and C.V.C.s

Students who have decided that the academic stream is not suitable for them and who have no vocational education options available in their schools should, if possible, be transferred to C.V.C.s and A.V.C.s. This also applies to students who need more flexibility than the grade school system provides. For these students, a transfer to a C.V.C. or A.V.C. would be preferable to leaving school altogether. Implementation of this measure would require policy changes at a provincial government level.

1.D Student Leave

It is recognized that, regardless of the extent of prevention and intervention programs, some students will see a need to drop out. One method which may help students to make the best decision for themselves is to grant a "leave" from school. Such a program would require that students be assigned a school staff advisor whom they would contact on a regular basis. Counselling of this nature would ensure that students keep their options open and would facilitate and encourage a return to school for many students. This approach would have to be used very judiciously so that it would not be considered as an endorsement to leave school.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

The most important consideration in reducing the level of early school leaving is the student at risk. This is the student who has the ability, but for various reasons will not make it through school. It is this student who requires attention and needs alternatives to help him/her stay in school longer.

The current education system is directed primarily at students who will complete their schooling. Very few programs in northern schools are aimed at encouraging potential leavers to stay in school longer. Educators identified a definite need for mitigative measures related to this area and considered programs for at-risk students to be critical to reducing dropout rates.

The first step in such a strategy is the identification of the high risk student. How can the school and the community recognize potential leavers? The data obtained from school records of 2,671 students identify the following characteristics as being typical of students who are likely to leave school early:

- 75 per cent of leavers are between 16 and 19 years of age;
- more students from remote and isolated areas leave at an earlier age (under 16 years);
- leavers have often been retained one or two grades;
- Native students tend to complete fewer grades than Caucasians before leaving;
- the number of male and female leavers is similar;
- leavers often have failing grades;
- leavers' rate of attendance is low;
- most early leavers tend to be of average or below average intelligence. There are few leavers in the high intelligence range; and
- leavers often have discipline problems.

In addition, interviews with early school leavers and other groups revealed that:

- leavers tend to have relatives and many friends who have also left school prior to completion;
- leavers have often moved around from school to school;
- leavers often have problems with the law;
- most leavers do not feel positively about their relationships with teachers; and
- leavers often lack parental support and encouragement at home.

It is possible to identify the high risk student on the basis of this picture of the early leaver. Mitigative measures should then be developed to help these potential dropouts remain in school.

1.3.2 Awareness of the early school leaver problem

Goal: Parents, community members, educators and students need to be informed about the extent of the early school leaver problem, how to recognize potential dropouts, and what can be done to reduce the number of early leavers.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

2.A Awareness Workshops and Seminars (*)

These workshops should focus on increasing awareness of the problem, describing the characteristics of the leaver and the at-risk student, and outlining what can be done at different levels to mitigate against students' leaving school early. The information sessions should be directed to educators in northern schools, school board members, parents and the communities in general.

2.B Student Awareness Sessions (*)

Awareness sessions should be presented for junior high and high school students. The emphasis would be on developing an awareness of early school leaving, its consequences, the choices available, and what can be done to improve the situation. If workshops with students could be co-ordinated successfully with existing classroom programs such as social studies, an on-going learning experience could be provided.

2.C Government and Central Agency Awareness (*)

Government departments, primarily Alberta Education and Alberta Advanced Education, have a key role to play in the implementation of programs that will deal with mitigating against early school leaving. Similarly, institutions, agencies and organizations that are centralized (i.e. Alberta Teachers' Association, Alberta School Trustees' Association, University of Alberta) also have a very important function. Awareness sessions should be provided for representatives of these groups.

> Goal: A system of student records should be developed which allows better tracking of early school leavers.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

2.D Monitoring System (*)

It is recommended that an early school leaver monitoring system be set up at the local level, and that it feed directly into a broader provincial system. This represents two systems:

i) The first is a computer-based system centralized by Alberta Education. It would be comprehensive and cover the entire province. This system might take some time to implement and might not meet in-depth local information requirements. A full description of such a system is contained in Appendix E.

ii) The other type of monitoring system is a local data collection approach aimed at obtaining a limited amount of information on incoming students and those who are leaving. The responsibility for data collection would belong to the school. This would be an interim technique and/or would supplement the centralized data system mentioned above.

> Goal: A school/community committee should be set up to monitor the early leaver situation and to identify the need for specific mitigative measures.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

2.E School/Community Liaison Committee (*)

It is recommended that a committee consisting of students, teachers, parents and interagency representatives be established in each community. The committee would deal with all aspects of the early school leaver problem including reviewing student-teacher-parent-community interactions. In addition to developing programs to deal with at-risk students, this committee could also coordinate a local needs assessment and assist in the selection of mitigative measures for the general school population.

A manual on the structuring, responsibilities, and mandate of this committee should be prepared. It should delineate clearly the limits of committee involvement so that the committee does not infringe on the domain of the school and school administration. The committee would function in a manner that is complementary and supplementary to the role of the school.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

The first step in the solution of any problem is to create an awareness of its existence, its characteristics, and what can be done about it. At present there appears to be a general lack of knowledge in this area; there is little awareness of the extent of the early school leaver problem and few intervention programs are operating in the schools. It is necessary to foster and promote this awareness so that those who have a role in solving the problem know how they can become involved.

1.3.3 Student-teacher relationships

Goal: Better student-teacher relationships should be encouraged so that students feel positively about the school environment.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

3.A Teacher Communication Skills (*)

Teachers should be provided with instruction on how to achieve better communication skills in the classroom and with students in general. They should be required to take more courses in communications as part of their teacher training. This could be supplemented by a series of classroom communication seminars and workshops implemented as a priority in-service training program. The emphasis and concentration should not be solely on the skill of communication but also on what is being communicated to the students.

3.B Student Emphasis (*)

There should be a shift toward more student emphasis in teaching at the senior high level. A teaching system should be developed that permits more teacher-student contact than is the case at present. To effect this, it is recommended that the schools retain a homeroom, class-group type of system. This is especially relevant to the organization, administration and functioning of large composite schools in urban centres. In some schools, the homeroom system has been done away with, eliminating the student's sense of belonging to a class, grade or group. The campus approach is not conducive to good relationships which students require throughout the grade school system.

3.C Smaller Schools

Smaller schools facilitate better student-teacher contact and provide students with a better sense of involvement than do larger schools. In addition they provide an alternative to long bus rides and boarding out, by locating the school in the community.

It is recognized that small schools may have some disadvantages such as a limited selection of course options. However, it is suggested that, where feasible, consideration be given to the development of small schools.

This approach is particularly viable in view of new technologies such as distance education which are becoming increasingly available.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

Student-teacher relationships play a key role in providing an atmosphere that is pleasant and encouraging to students in schools. Poor student-teacher relationships were identified as being a significant factor in students' decisions to leave school. This is supported by the following data, obtained in interviews with leavers, students, parents and educators:

- one-third of school leavers mentioned problems with teachers and administrators as a reason for leaving school early;
- 28 per cent of leavers felt that teachers and administrators were most responsible for students' dropping out;
- 59 per cent of leavers rated teaching approaches as a very important factor in early school leaving;
- only 13 per cent of leavers talked to their teachers and only 25 per cent talked to administrators prior to leaving school;
- 21 per cent of high risk students said that they had considered leaving school early because of problems with teachers and administrators;
- 29 per cent of parents indicated better teachers would improve the system for students;
- 23 per cent of parents felt the teachers were most responsible for students' leaving school;
- fewer than one-half (46 per cent) of parents reported being contacted by the school after the decision to leave was made;
- 64 per cent of the parents said that no one at the school attempted to help their child remain in school;
- for all of the interview groups, human, caring features were considered to be the most desirable characteristics of an effective teacher.

During the course of the field work for this study, it was recognized that the effective schools which were enjoyed by the students, and the successful programs aimed at keeping students in school, had one thing in common - staff who are strongly dedicated to students and their welfare, and to effective communication with them.

1.3.4 Recognizing the value and need for education

Goal: Students with a better understanding of the value of education would be more likely to remain in school longer.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

4.A Career Counselling (*)

A career counselling program, which is part of the curriculum, and is compulsory for all students, should be developed for all schools. Provision for adaptation to unique local conditions should be provided in the program. Given that the highest frequency of dropouts (70 per cent) occurs after the completion of grade 9, this program should be introduced in grade 7 at the latest, and run through to grade 11.

4.B Work Experience

It is recommended that a local work experience program be developed. A standard model which forms part of the curriculum, but has provisions for adaptation to local circumstances, should be adopted. The program should involve direct work experience with local businesses. This may be especially beneficial as part of a synthesized approach for dealing with high risk students. It would also serve to enhance parent-community involvement in the school.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

Based on the study data, it appears that early leavers generally do not fully appreciate the value of education at the time they leave school. Recognition of the need for education often occurs at a later date, at which time regret and a desire to return to school are usually expressed. As a consequence, a large number of dropouts return for additional schooling. The following study data obtained from interviews with early school leavers, support this picture:

- 31 per cent of leavers indicated not being interested in school as a reason for leaving;
- 81 per cent of leavers interviewed indicated that if they had to do it again, they would choose to stay in school;
- 92 per cent indicated that they would get more schooling in the next five years. Of these, 50 per cent had already taken courses or were back in school;
- 71 per cent of educators felt that value of education programs and career counselling directed to all students would be effective in reducing dropout rates.

A better appreciation of the value of education and the lifestyle options it provides would be beneficial in keeping students in school longer. Most educators interviewed indicated that there was an absence of good programs aimed at achieving this in their schools. The development and implementation of measures which promote greater recognition of the value of education should be encouraged.

1.3.5 Community/school involvement

Goal: Parents and the community should have greater involvement with local schools.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

5.A Community Involvement (*)

Schools and communities should undertake a thorough review of parent-community involvement. This could be a function of the school/community liaison committee. A manual which lays out the methods of evaluation, the objectives of community involvement, and means of achieving these objectives would be beneficial. A plan for encouraging the desired involvement could then be drawn up and implemented at the community level. The unique characteristics of each centre would be reflected in the plan.

Teachers and the schools should encourage more events that promote community-parent-school contacts. Suggestions in this area include the following:

- more frequent parent-teacher interviews;
- an active community-school committee directly involved in selection of mitigative measures, initiation of at-risk student intervention programs, organizing volunteers, and other types of school-community coordination;
- parent contacts that do not deal exclusively with negative behaviour in crisis situations but also focus on positive behaviour;
- parents' day at the school (to attend with students);
- teacher home visits with the student present, for all grade levels;
- extensive use of parent volunteers to assist, not replace, teaching staff; and
- an upward extension of the Early Childhood Services (E.C.S.) parent program.

5.B Community Schools

The use of school facilities should not be limited to teaching students during the day. The school's physical plant should be treated as a community asset to be used by the community members. Evening use by adults and students should be encouraged and activities should be programmed during the day if space permits. Other uses include adult education, C.V.C. and A.V.C. courses, special seminars and workshops, and various community meetings and activities. Rather than building separate facilities in a community, additions should be made to the school's physical plant. This would create an important focal point in the community, remove parents' fear and uncertainty about schools, and through a joint adult-student sharing of facilities, positively change students' impressions of school.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

Involving parents and the community more closely with the school is important in providing an atmosphere that encourages students to remain in school. Educators gave this issue a high priority rating. Support for this is found in the following study data, obtained from interviews with parents and educators:

- most educators and parents indicated that parent-community involvement in the school is very limited. This usually involves little more than parent-teacher interviews and some use of parent volunteers;
- 82 per cent of educators felt that more community involvement would help reduce the dropout rate;
- 43 per cent of educators felt that more parent involvement could be achieved through convincing parents of the value of education and removing their fear of school;
- 29 per cent of educators said parents should be directly involved in school policy;
- 78 per cent of parents who were interviewed strongly supported parent and community involvement with the school. Suggested approaches included more frequent parent-teacher contact, more active P.T.A.'s, and more parent volunteers and aides.

There was a general feeling that community involvement with the school would demonstrate that parents cared for the children and recognized the importance of education. Schools should be encouraged to become real community schools with activities aimed at parent-community participation. This involvement should be geared towards all residents of the community and maximize general participation.

1.3.6 Student involvement

Goal: Students should be encouraged to participate in school activities so that they have a greater sense of belonging to the school community.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

6.A Sports Program (*)

It is recommended that strong sports programs be developed for all of the schools in the north. Teachers, parents, and students should be involved in the planning and running of the programs and student participation should be maximized, and even made compulsory, if necessary. In addition to a good intramural program, extramural participation should be encouraged since it contributes to fostering a positive school spirit.

6.B Field Programs

It is recommended that schools have a well planned field program. This is especially important given the relative isolation of many northern Alberta communities. Field trips which offer access to academic, cultural and economic centres outside of northern Alberta should be offered throughout the year.

6.C Student Government

Some form of student government should exist at junior and senior high levels, and the government structure should maximize student participation. For example, there might be a central government with various student committees for sports, field programs, clubs, and community relations. School staff should provide a clear mandate for the functioning of the student government and then be involved only in a guidance role. A manual which provides a model and mandate description for student government would be helpful. To be most meaningful, it is important that all students, and particularly those at risk, be encouraged to participate in the governmental process. High levels of student participation should be rewarded. Extreme care must be taken to make sure that involvement is not limited to the high achiever or certain groups of students.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

One of the characteristics of the high risk student and the early leaver is a lack of involvement with the school's extracurricular activities. The student who stays is more likely to be involved in school activities and to have a sense of belonging. It was observed during the field work that schools with an exciting atmosphere and keen student interest were also schools that promoted student participation in extracurricular activities.

The following data, obtained through interviews, are relevant to this issue:

- 52 per cent of leavers and high risk students were involved in extracurricular activities compared to 64 per cent of the stayers;
- 30 per cent of leavers and high risk students mentioned physical education as a popular subject and 44 per cent mentioned sports as activities they enjoyed while in school;
- all student groups interviewed mentioned that more extracurricular activities would make schools interesting and encourage students to stay in school.

Programs which encourage student involvement and participation should be developed in order to make school more interesting for students. The goal of these programs should be to maximize student involvement in the school community.

1.3.7 Relevance of education

Goal: Courses offered in northern school should be relevant to the geography and culture of the area.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

7.A Curriculum Review and Adaptation (*)

A review of the curriculum and its ability to meet northern education needs should be undertaken. The review should evaluate the relevance of an academic stream for students from communities where schools do not go to grade 12 and who thus have limited opportunity to continue their schooling. It should also examine the relevance of the subject content to local conditions, as well as future occupational opportunities for the students. This assessment should tie in directly with the curriculum review which is currently being conducted by the Department of Education.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

Students are discouraged from staying in school when they view their courses as irrelevant to their lifestyle and their needs. Given that the education system and curriculum is based largely on white, middle-class values and customs, and that much of northern Alberta has unique characteristics which differ from this, it may be that the existing curriculum is not totally relevant to many of the local cultural and geographic conditions of the north.

For many northern students, the existing curricula offerings are not totally relevant to their needs and wants. Yet, due to small enrollments and financial constraints, the variety of subjects which are taught is very limited. This is exemplified by the following data, obtained through interviews with students, educators and community representatives:

- virtually all students interviewed in towns and rural areas indicated that there were subjects they would like to take which were not offered in their schools;
- students were especially interested in taking subjects in the areas of vocational education, living skills programs, business education and local history and culture;
- most community group representatives said school would be more worthwhile for children if the curriculum was improved;
- 53 per cent of community group representatives, and 30 per cent of school leavers, parents and high risk students rated irrelevant courses as a very important reason for early school leaving;
- 79 per cent of educators who were interviewed indicated that there were courses not offered in their schools which potential leavers would like to take. In particular, they noted vocational education subjects.

A review of the curriculum, with the objective of developing and implementing more relevant programs, is necessary for many parts of the north. In addition to meeting the basic education requirements, a greater range of course options should be considered. More recognition of geography and culture in the content of these courses is highly desirable.

1.3.8 Education after dropping out

Goal: At-risk students and student who drop out of school should have access to other educational alternatives.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

8.A C.V.C./A.V.C. Interface with Grade School System

The A.V.C.s and C.V.C.s should interface directly with the grade school system to provide for the education of those who drop out. There are several aspects to this:

- A.V.C.s and C.V.C.s seem to be operating at capacity now and waiting lists are common. Capacity in these institutions should be expanded according to need;
- the A.V.C.s and C.V.C.s might contract with the school districts to offer courses or teach groups of students in the grade schools. These courses would serve to complement the grade school course offerings. This would help dropouts who return to take courses and those who would otherwise leave. Students could take courses simultaneously through both institutions;
- the 18 year old age restriction for enrollment in A.V.C.s and C.V.C.s should be removed. This would serve to eliminate the lack of education alternatives for the dropout who is less than 18 years of age.

In centres where C.V.C.s and A.V.C.s do not exist, mobile labs and programs would be a possible alternative.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

Many students decide after dropping out that they would like to further their education. For most of these students, there are real and perceived barriers to returning to an educational institution. Facilitating the return of these students to school would reduce the social and economic costs associated with their unemployment or underemployment. The following study data relate to this issue:

- 50 per cent of the dropouts from the 2,671 reported cases were under 18 years of age and had less than grade 11 at the time of dropping out.

In addition, interviews with early school leavers revealed the following:

- 92 per cent of leavers who were interviewed stated that they intended to get more education in the next five years;
- 44 per cent indicated a desire for vocational education and 24 per cent stated they would return to high school;
- 50 per cent had taken at least one course since dropping out. Forty-one per cent had taken vocational education; and
- many students found it difficult to go back to school because they felt they had lost touch with the system. They felt they were not wanted or could not register in an A.V.C. or C.V.C. because they were under 18 years of age.

Returning to grade school or a post-secondary education institution should be facilitated for students who drop out of school early. The transition from the grade school system to the adult education institution should be made easier so that students' education may be continuous.

1.3.9 Busing alternatives

Goal: Alternatives to busing long distances to school should be considered.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

9.A School Decentralization

It is recommended that the need for small, decentralized schools be reviewed in situations where long bus rides to central schools exist. This program would serve several objectives favourable to encouraging students to stay in school longer. Decentralization would shorten bus rides, allow smaller schools, put schools back in the community and result in better student-community-parent-teacher interaction. Through modern technologies such as distance education techniques, a wide range of programs could be offered in these schools.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

Long bus rides to schools in rural areas is a cause for concern among parents, educators and some students. In some cases, children are on the bus two hours each way. It is felt that this has a negative impact on students' performance and may discourage them from staying in school. Parents were concerned that their children were away from home for too long each day (i.e. up to 11 hours). This is supported by the following points, derived from discussions with leavers, parents, educators and community representatives:

- 71 per cent of leavers, compared to 63 per cent of stayers, rode the bus to school during their school years;
- parents, educators and community group representatives agreed that bus rides were detrimental to school performance and might contribute to early school leaving.

Wherever possible, bus rides should be shortened. An alternative to very long bus rides, which should be considered on an individual case basis, is that of having smaller decentralized schools.

1.3.10 Teaching system

Goal: Remote and isolated communities should develop a philosophy of education to guide the schooling of their children.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

10.A Philosophy of Education (*)

It is recommended that a philosophy of education be defined for all remote and isolated communities. This philosophy should be developed by local community boards and community members; the participants would have to be instructed on how to use their own resources to define this philosophy. The school board and school would then have the responsibility of translating this philosophy into courses and programs for the students.

> Goal: The school system should be adapted to meet the special needs of students in remote and isolated areas.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

10.B Primary Grade Failures (*)

Remote and isolated areas should implement an alternative to the existing pass-fail-repeat system, particularly at the primary levels. A logical alternative is a unit-continuous promotion system in which students progress continuously, unit by unit, according to individual levels of preparedness and ability.

10.C Preschool Program

As evidenced by high primary grade failure rates, many students in remote areas are not ready to begin school. It is recommended that through the cooperation of the school and community, preschool programs be introduced in all communities where they do not currently exist.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

The development of an education philosophy and adaptation of the school system to meet local needs were considered to be very important by educators dealing with remote communities. A review of the relevant literature indicated that 80 per cent of students who fail in grades 1 and 2 never make it through grade 12. Their initial experiences of failure in school leave them with a negative impression that lasts. The following information is relevant to this issue:

- the data from the school records indicated that Natives have a higher failure rate than Caucasians; and
- educators who were interviewed felt that high Native failure rates are due to a lack of readiness for the early grades and the fact that the curriculum is not geared toward Native cultural or language considerations.

Lack of a philosophy of education for many communities makes it difficult to determine a relevant curriculum content. Where possible, the administration of the education system should be reviewed and modified to better meet local conditions in remote and isolated areas. The objective would be to provide a more meaningful education for the students.

1.3.11 High teacher turnover rates

Goal: Teachers should be encouraged to stay longer in remote northern schools.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

11.A Teacher Orientation

Teachers should receive an orientation to the schools and local conditions they will face. This can be achieved through a cooperative effort by the school jurisdiction, community and local school. One approach would be to orient the prospective employee to the community prior to offering him/her a teaching position. If direct exposure is difficult, then a film/photo presentation on the community should be prepared along with a description of local conditions. This should be a realistic portrayal of community life, showing both the positive and negative aspects of the school and community.

11.B Teacher Paid Sabbatical

A system of paid sabbatical leave might encourage teachers in remote and isolated communities to stay longer by providing them with a periodic break.

There are many options for putting such a program into operation. For example, eligibility might come after a specified period of time such as two, three or six years and the sabbatical might be for a duration of one year or six months. The program could also vary depending on the degree of community isolation and might be based partially on merit. The specific details would have to be worked out through consultation with school boards and school administrators and would probably vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In conjunction with this, a teacher exchange program with other areas of the province, and with retired teachers, might be worthy of consideration.

11.C Integrate Teacher Housing

Teachers in northern communities tend to live apart from the other residents. An expression used to describe the housing for teachers in remote communities is "the compound". The housing is often fenced, and is structually different from other community housing. This sets the teachers aside and discourages their participation in the community. Where possible, staff housing should be integrated with community housing, and fencing should be removed.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

Teachers in remote and isolated areas tend to leave after a few years of experience. For example, in Northland School Division, the teacher turnover rate is approximately 2.5 years compared to 6 years for Alberta as a whole. This influences the quality of student-teacher relationships, as discussed earlier, and relates directly to school dropout rates. This is evidenced by the following interview data:

- 23 per cent of parents who were interviewed felt that teachers were most responsible for students' leaving school early;
- 31 per cent of educators rated problems with teachers and administrators as a reason for students' dropping out;
- 20 per cent of the educators identified the ability to relate to the community as a unique characteristic of an effective teacher in northern Alberta.

Measures which increase the length of time that teachers stay in the community will be effective in providing a better school atmosphere and will encourage students to stay in school longer. They will give the teachers time to become acquainted with their communities and students, and as a result, communications will be improved.

1.3.12 Teacher preparation

Goal: Teachers should have better preparation and training for teaching in the north.

Recommended Mitigative Measures:

12.A English as a Second Language Training (*)

In schools where there are high Native enrollments, primary grade teachers, and to a lesser extent teachers at higher levels, should be trained in teaching English as a Second Language. Currently many children begin school speaking only their Native language. Teachers are often not prepared to deal with the situation effectively and the student's first exposure to the classroom is one of frustration and failure. Where it is not possible to have properly trained teachers, a Native teacher aide should be in the classroom.

12.B Teacher Training

Teachers with an interest in northern teaching should pursue a program of studies which emphasizes multi-cultural education. The current program at the University of Alberta Department of Education should be reviewed for its adequacy in meeting cultural education requirements applicable to northern Alberta Native cultures. Students must be made aware of this education option. In addition, off-campus institutions might cooperate with the university or independently offer teacher preparation programs in Northern Studies.

12.C Student Teaching

Student teachers at Alberta universities should be encouraged to take their practicum in remote and isolated communities. This would have to be arranged jointly by the universities and the participating school boards. The program would foster a better appreciation of the demands of teaching and living in northern communities.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

Most teachers in the north, and particularly in the remote and isolated communities have received no special preparation for teaching in a unique geographical and cultural setting. Teachers should be better prepared for coping in the northern environment, so that they function more effectively.

Interview data, obtained through discussions with teachers and educators, support this:

- educators indicated that an effective teacher in northern Alberta must relate to the community, accept other cultures and be self-confident, self-reliant and independent;
- 86 per cent of teachers interviewed stated that they did not receive any special training for teaching in the north;
- most educators felt that better preparation could be achieved by providing new teachers with a realistic orientation to the situation they will face. exposure to northern and Native cultures in study programs, and local student teaching.

Measures which better prepare teachers for northern teaching experiences would serve to encourage teachers to stay longer, make them more effective, foster better relationships with the students and the communities, and thereby encourage students to stay in school longer.

1.3.13 Education alternatives for remote communities

Goal: Alternatives which allow students to continue their education in their local community should be encouraged.

13.A Multi-Subject, Multi-Grade Classrooms

Small high schools, having several grades and several subjects taught in one classroom, should be developed. The responsibility for this could be shared by several teachers from all grade levels. History provides an excellent example of the effective working of this system; this approach is already happening in some communities with positive results. Supervised correspondence courses might also be integrated into this approach.

13.B Mobile Education/Distance Education

Mobile education was strongly identified as a workable alternative by those interviewed in this study. It has the potential to provide education in certain subject areas in a cost-effective manner. This is especially true for areas of study such as vocational education that cannot be taught easily in smaller schools. It is recommended that models for mobile education be reviewed and implemented. This can be done in conjunction with the C.V.C.s and A.V.C.s. In addition, other types of distance education technologies should be considered.

13.C Boarding/Group Homes

Where there are no alternatives to boarding out, a more compatible boarding situation must be developed. It would necessitate several approaches:

- providing prior orientation for the students;
- having a group home that would include other children from the student's community;
- having house parents who understand the culture and could devote time to helping the children in their adjustment: and
- making the school and teachers aware of the background of the students to help facilitate their adjustment.

Rationale for Recommended Mitigative Measures:

In many small and isolated communities, the grade levels in the school are limited to grades seven, eight, or nine. To continue with their education, students must leave the community and go to a boarding situation elsewhere.

Experience has shown repeatedly that boarding out generally does not work. Students cannot readily adjust to both a new school and a new lifestyle away from home at the same time. They experience failure, frustration and loneliness. As a consequence, many quit and go back home.

Alternatives aimed at providing further education in these communities should be encouraged. This would allow students to continue their education in a familiar environment and would encourage them to stay in school longer.

1.4 Implementation models

1.4.1 Introduction

This section presents a synthesis of the recommended mitigative measures into working models. Two models are presented:

- i) an implementation plan for the school, school jurisdiction and community (Figure 1.4.1); and
- ii) recommendations for central and government agencies (Figure 1.4.2).

In these models, each of the mitigative measures discussed in the previous section of the report is presented as part of an integrated action plan.

In order to consolidate the information into the models, several broad categories have been derived for grouping the mitigative measures. Similar groupings are utilized in each of the two models to facilitate comparisons. The major categories and sub-categories include the following:

1. Awareness of the Early School Leaver Problem.
2. Developing an Intervention Program for At-Risk Students.
3. Mitigative Measures for the General School Population:
    - i) Improving the School Environment
    - ii) Modifying the Curriculum
    - iii) Improving Teacher-Student Interaction
4. Improving School-Community Relations.

Each of these categories incorporates several of the early school leaver issues which were described in Section 1.2. Where relevant, a particular issue may be included in more than one category. The recommended mitigative measures related to these issues are listed in the associated boxes of the model.

The specific issues which are incorporated in each of the broad categories in the model are as follows:

i) Awareness of the Early School Leaver Problem includes:
   - Awareness and Monitoring

ii) Developing an Intervention Program for At-Risk Students includes the issues:
   - The Student At Risk
   - Awareness of the Early School Leaver Problem
   - Recognizing the Value and Need for Education

iii) Improving the School Environment includes the issues:
   - Student-Teacher Relationships
   - Student Involvement
   - Busing Alternatives
   - Education Alternatives for Remote Communities

iv) Modifying the Curriculum includes the issues:
   - The Student At Risk
   - Recognizing the Value and Need for Education
   - Relevance of Education
   - Education After Dropping Out
   - Teaching System
   - Education Alternatives for Remote Communities

v) Improving Teacher-Student Interactions includes the issues:
   - Student-Teacher Relationships
   - High Teacher Turnover Rates
   - Teacher Preparation

vi) Improving School-Community Relations includes the issue:
   - Community-School Involvement

Wherever possible, an implementation sequence has been indicated by flow chart arrows. The majority of measures are presented, however, in a unit manner so that schools, communities, and central agencies which undertake an early school leaver program may select the combination of elements which they consider most critical.

The models are developed primarily at a concept level. The specific implementation details will have to be derived by the school, community, and central agencies as they proceed with the development of their early school leaver programs.

1.4.2 Implementation plan for the school, school jurisdiction and community

1.4.2.1 Overview

Figure 1.4.1 presents the implementation plan for the school, school district and community. The intent of this model is to provide an integrated overview of mitigative measures, so that individuals concerned with improving the school leaver situation can see, at a conceptual level, the range of actions and the implementation sequence they should consider.

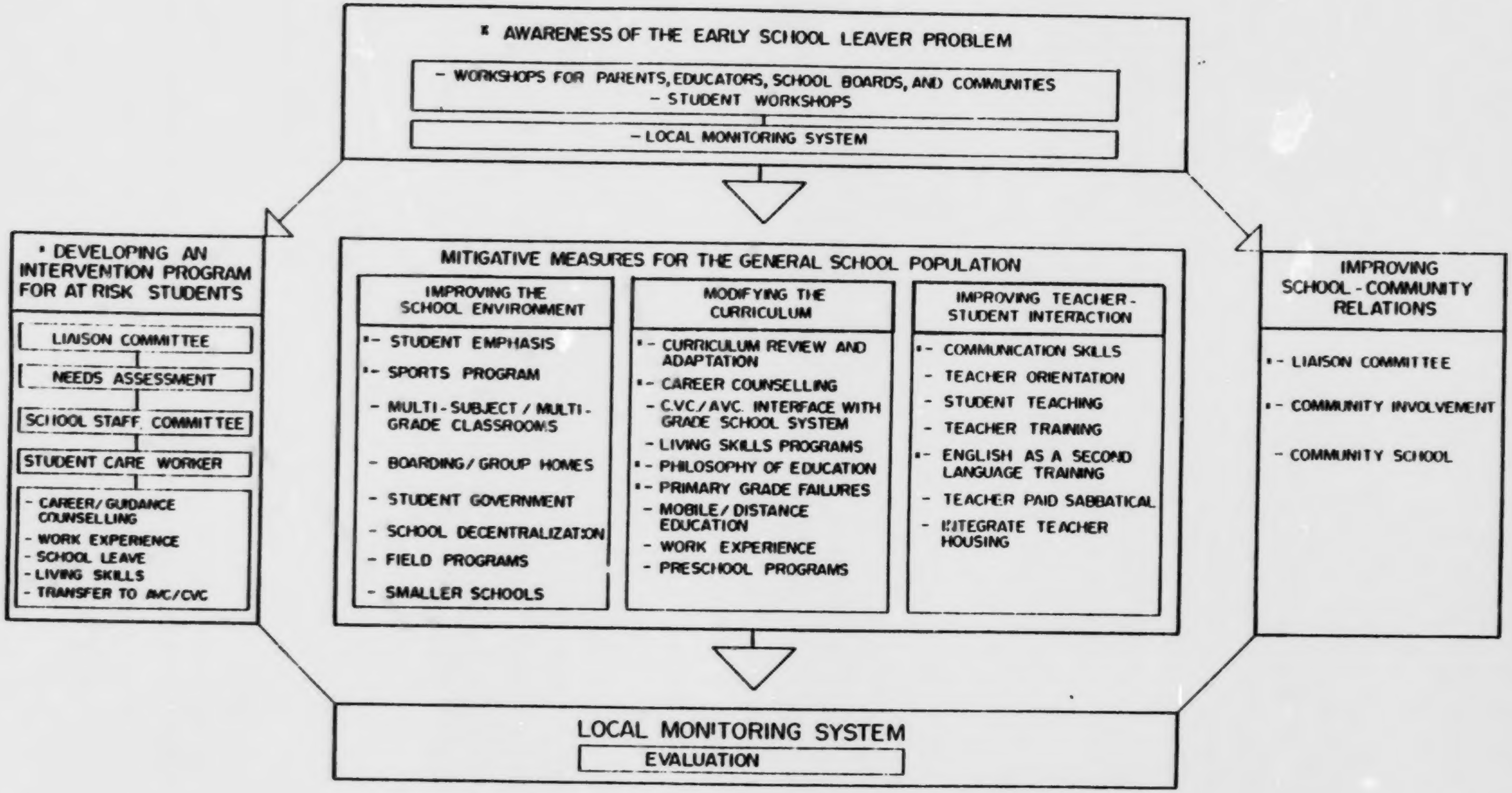
As indicated at the top of the model, the first step in implementation is creating awareness of the problem. Awareness sessions directed at students, parents, agency representatives, and educators at a community level should describe the early leaver situation, what can be done about it, the various roles of participants, and the details of the implementation model.

As part of the awareness strategy, a monitoring program should be developed at the local level to provide a system of student tracking, so that early school leavers may be identified. In the initial stages, the monitoring system would provide information about the incidence of early school leaving in specific schools and communities. In the later stages (see lower box of the model) the monitoring system could be an evaluation tool providing an indication of the success of specific measures in mitigating against early school leaving.

Figure 1.4.1

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

FOR THE SCHOOL, SCHOOL DISTRICT AND COMMUNITY [1]


* AWARENESS OF THE EARLY SCHOOL LEAVER PROBLEM
- WORKSHOPS FOR PARENTS, EDUCATORS, SCHOOL BOARDS, AND COMMUNITIES
- STUDENT WORKSHOPS
- LOCAL MONITORING SYSTEM
* DEVELOPING AN INTERVENTION PROGRAM FOR AT RISK STUDENTS
LIAISON COMMITTEE
NEEDS ASSESSMENT
SCHOOL STAFF COMMITTEE
STUDENT CARE WORKER
- CAREER/GUIDANCE COUNSELLING
- WORK EXPERIENCE
- SCHOOL LEAVE
- LIVING SKILLS
- TRANSFER TO AVC/CVC
MITIGATIVE MEASURES FOR THE GENERAL SCHOOL POPULATION
IMPROVING THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT
*- STUDENT EMPHASIS
*- SPORTS PROGRAM
- MULTI-SUBJECT / MULTI-GRADE CLASSROOMS
- BOARDING/GROUP HOMES
- STUDENT GOVERNMENT
- SCHOOL DECENTRALIZATION
- FIELD PROGRAMS
- SMALLER SCHOOLS
MODIFYING THE CURRICULUM
*- CURRICULUM REVIEW AND ADAPTATION
*- CAREER COUNSELLING
- C.VC/AVC. INTERFACE WITH GRADE SCHOOL SYSTEM
- LIVING SKILLS PROGRAMS
*- PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION
*- PRIMARY GRADE FAILURES
- MOBILE/DISTANCE EDUCATION
- WORK EXPERIENCE
- PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS
IMPROVING TEACHER-STUDENT INTERACTION
*- COMMUNICATION SKILLS
- TEACHER ORIENTATION
- STUDENT TEACHING
- TEACHER TRAINING
*- ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TRAINING
- TEACHER PAID SABBATICAL
- INTEGRATE TEACHER HOUSING
IMPROVING SCHOOL-COMMUNITY RELATIONS
*- LIAISON COMMITTEE
*- COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT
- COMMUNITY SCHOOL
LOCAL MONITORING SYSTEM
EVALUATION

1. NOTE: MANY OF THESE MEASURES COULD BE INITIATED AT THE SCHOOL OR COMMUNITY LEVEL BUT COULD REQUIRE ASSISTANCE FROM OUTSIDE AGENCIES

* HIGH PRIORITY

Once awareness is created, and there is general concern about reducing the number of early leavers, several directions may be taken. These are:

i) Development of an intervention program for at-risk students;
ii) Development of mitigative measures directed to the general school population, including:
    - Improving the school environment;
    - Modifying the curriculum;
    - Improving teacher-student interaction;
iii) Improving school-community relations.

Specific mitigative measures related to each of these themes are listed in each box of the model, and those which are considered to be of highest priority in mitigating against early school leaving are marked with an asterisk.

A school, community, or school jurisdiction may select from this array of mitigative measures the specific elements which they consider to be most critical and most viable for their particular situation. Since each of the themes has been identified as a major area of concern, it is recommended that measures from each theme be integrated into an implementation strategy. Input from a school-community liaison committee would help to identify needs and provide guidance for selection of specific mitigation methods.

Some of the measures may be initiated with very little time and money, while others may require a longer time frame, funding, and assistance from outside agencies. A plan of action which considers these factors and outlines future planning priorities and areas of responsibility could be drawn up by each school, school jurisdiction or community.

1.4.2.2 Developing an intervention program for at-risk students[1]

In this section, details of an action program aimed specifically at recognized at-risk students are outlined. "At-risk" students are those identified by school staff as having a high probability of leaving school early.

The essence of this program is a close working relationship between parents, school staff, and the student at-risk. Students remain in the classroom setting, but have extensive contact with a person whose main responsibility is to provide support for at-risk students (i.e. a student care worker). Due to the personalized nature of this approach, a screening system is necessary so that the number of participants is restricted to those who most need help. The presence of such a program will focus attention on the problem of early school leaving and will act as a catalyst to motivate changes in other aspects of the school environment.

Elements of the At-Risk student program include:

i) School-Community Liaison Committee

The committee is an essential component of the at-risk student program. It would focus attention on the school leaver problem, identify the need for mitigative measures, and act as a motivating and coordinating body for the implementation of the remediation programs. The role of this committee could also be expanded to encourage awareness of the early leaver problem, and to aid in the selection of mitigative measures.

The committee should be comprised of students, school staff, parents, and representatives of concerned agencies. Its mandate and functions must be clearly defined, and should complement the role of the school. The committee should be involved in an initial needs assessment, and suggest directions for the at-risk student program.

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[1] A modified, but similar version of this synthesized approach has been in the development and implementation stages at Edwin Parr Composite School in Athabasca, Alberta for the last four years. The experiences there have been very positive. A significant number of children have completed high school who otherwise would not have made it through the school system, and early leavers have left much better prepared for coping with their lives.

ii) Needs Assessment

An assessment should be undertaken which identifies the parameters of the early school leaver problem for the specific school and community. This should be prepared by the liaison committee in the initial stages of the program. On the basis of this needs assessment, specific mitigative measures which address the unique needs of the at-risk students in that community should be selected from the implementation model. The needs assessment should be reviewed periodically and modified if necessary.

iii) School-Staff Committee

This committee should be comprised of school staff who have an interest and willingness to become involved with at-risk students. The members might include counsellors, student care workers, teachers, administrators or other concerned staff. Their responsibility would be to review students' eligibility for the program and assist with the implementation of the program at the school level.

iv) Student Care Worker

The student care worker provides the personal contact and support which is the critical element for the success of a high risk student program. If possible this person should not be a classroom teacher, since a great deal of flexibility is needed to deal with the demands of the students.

The main responsibility of the student care worker is to monitor and work closely with the students in the program. Specific functions include the following:

- performing case studies on students referred to the program;
- working closely with the school counsellor;
- meeting with and counselling students in the program;
- contacting parents frequently (two times per month):
- checking attendance and grades;

- looking for students on unexplained absences and bringing them back to school;
- monitoring classroom performance;
- working with outside agencies for necessary help;
- attending board disciplinary committee hearings;
- liaising with community groups and agencies as necessary;
- acting as a facilitator for regular group discussion sessions which all program students attend;
- arranging for and supervising work/study placements where these are considered important for the student;
- setting goals for the students and helping them to attain these;
- showing the student that someone really cares for them as a person.

v) Supplementary Mitigative Measures

Several additional elements may be integrated into the at-risk student program. These elements may have general applicability to the school population as a whole, but they may need to be adapted to the specific needs of the at-risk students. These include the following:

- career counselling;
- living skills courses;
- work experience or work-study programs;
- school leave; and
- interface with C.V.C. and A.V.C. programs and transfers to these programs.

1.4.2.3 Programs for the general school population

After an awareness of the early school leaver problem is established through workshops and awareness sessions, consideration should be given to implementing specific mitigative measures directed to the general school population. These measures are grouped into three themes in the model:

i) Improving the school environment;
ii) Modifying the curriculum; and
iii) Improving teacher-student interaction.

The intent of these measures is to encourage students to remain in school longer by enhancing student interaction with teachers and the school environment, and making school more relevant to the lives of the students.

1.4.2.4 Improving school-community relations

Community involvement with the school was identified in the study as an important factor in mitigating against early school leaving. A school-community liaison committee would serve as a catalyst to generate and maintain parental and community involvement. There should be an emphasis on improving parents' attitudes toward the school, and making the school an integral part of the community for adults as well as children.

1.4.2.5 Local monitoring system: evaluation

Measures which are implemented to reduce the incidence of early school leaving should be evaluated on an on-going basis to determine their effectiveness. The local monitoring system outlined in Section 1.3.2 could serve as an evaluation tool for this purpose. Such a system would allow comparisons of the incidence and characteristics of early school leaving prior to, and following implementation of the mitigative measures.

1.4.3 Recommendations for central and government agencies

Several of the recommended mitigative measures presented in the report fall under the jurisdiction of central and government decision-making bodies. Figure 1.4.2 categorizes these measures according to four general groupings. The explanation for the development of these categories is presented in Section 1.4.1. Those measures which are considered of highest priority are identified with an asterisk.

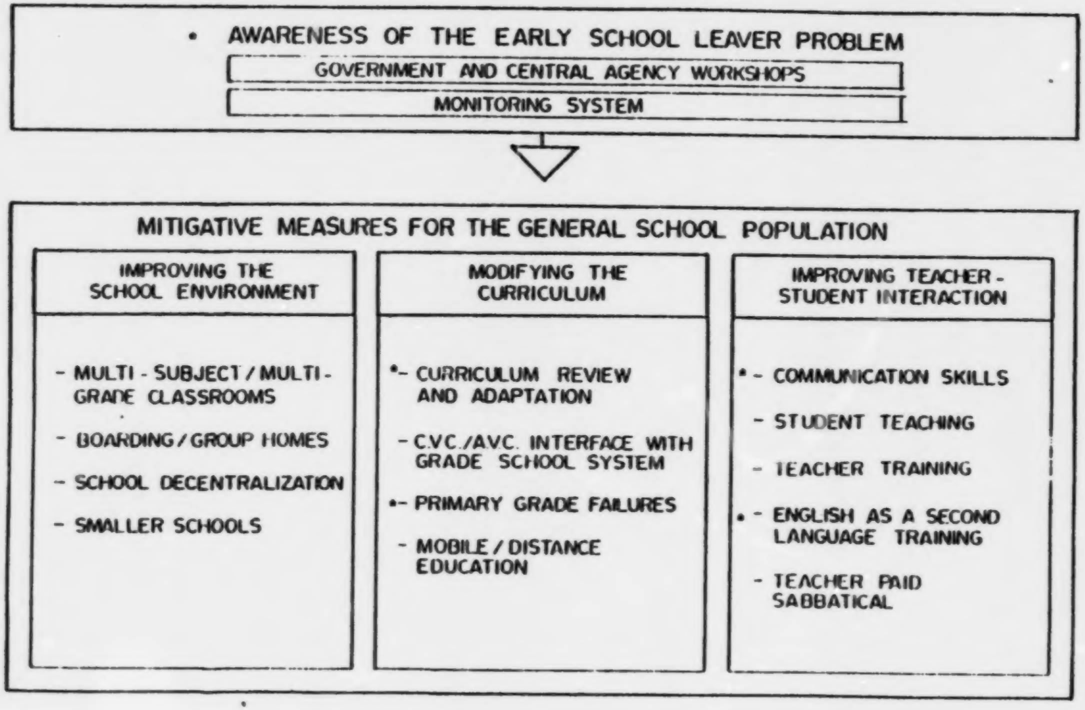
Specific recommendations for central and government agencies arising out of the study include the following concerns:

A. Awareness of the Early School Leaver Problem

   i) * Conducting workshops focusing on the early school leaver problem for government and central agency personnel.

Figure 1.4.2

Central and Government Agency Recommendations


• AWARENESS OF THE EARLY SCHOOL LEAVER PROBLEM
GOVERNMENT AND CENTRAL AGENCY WORKSHOPS
MONITORING SYSTEM
MITIGATIVE MEASURES FOR THE GENERAL SCHOOL POPULATION
IMPROVING THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT
- MULTI - SUBJECT / MULTI - GRADE CLASSROOMS
- BOARDING / GROUP HOMES
- SCHOOL DECENTRALIZATION
- SMALLER SCHOOLS
MODIFYING THE CURRICULUM
•- CURRICULUM REVIEW AND ADAPTATION
- C.V.C./A.V.C. INTERFACE WITH GRADE SCHOOL SYSTEM
•- PRIMARY GRADE FAILURES
- MOBILE / DISTANCE EDUCATION
IMPROVING TEACHER - STUDENT INTERACTION
• - COMMUNICATION SKILLS
- STUDENT TEACHING
- TEACHER TRAINING
• - ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE TRAINING
- TEACHER PAID SABBATICAL

ii) * Developing a centralized monitoring system for accurate tracking of early school leavers.

B. Improving the School Environment

- i) Providing multi-subject/multi-grade classrooms in remote communities as an alternative to no local school for higher grade levels.
- ii) Providing improved boarding situations such as group homes.
- iii) Decentralizing schools so that education may be provided for students in their local community.
- iv) Encouraging smaller schools rather than large composite schools.

C. Modifying the Curriculum

- i) * Reviewing and adapting the education system and the curriculum to meet the education needs of northern Alberta students.
- ii) Facilitating the interface between the C.V.C./A.V.C. system and the grade school system by modifying C.V.C./A.V.C. requirements.
- iii) * Implementing a continuous progress system at primary grade levels in remote and isolated communities.
- iv) Providing mobile and distance education opportunities for remote and isolated communities.

D. Improving Teacher-Student Interaction

- i) * Providing teachers with improved training in communication skills.
- ii) Facilitating and encouraging students to take their teaching practicum in northern communities.
- iii) Providing strong multi-cultural education programs at Alberta universities as part of teacher training.
- iv) * Providing teachers in remote and isolated communities with English as a Second Language training.
- v) Developing a system of paid sabbatical for teachers in remote and isolated communities.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the recommendations arising from a study on early school leaving in northern Alberta. The recommendations represent the culmination of an extensive research project which is documented in the following chapters.

The recommendations provide a strong basis from which decision-makers may initiate the development of action plans and implementation strategies. As part of this process, on-going studies will be needed to further investigate specific issues identified in the present research. Reducing the incidence of early school leaving is a never-ending process which requires involvement and commitment by all concerned. This project represents an initial step toward this goal.

II INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

This section of the report provides an introduction and context for the study. The historical background is described, and the purpose and objectives, administrative details and the study methodology are documented.

2.1.1 Purpose and spirit of the study

The study purpose is to describe the early school leaver situation as it currently exists in northern Alberta and to develop practical mitigative measures which address the situation. A literature review is included but the study focus is not a general restatement of the problem.

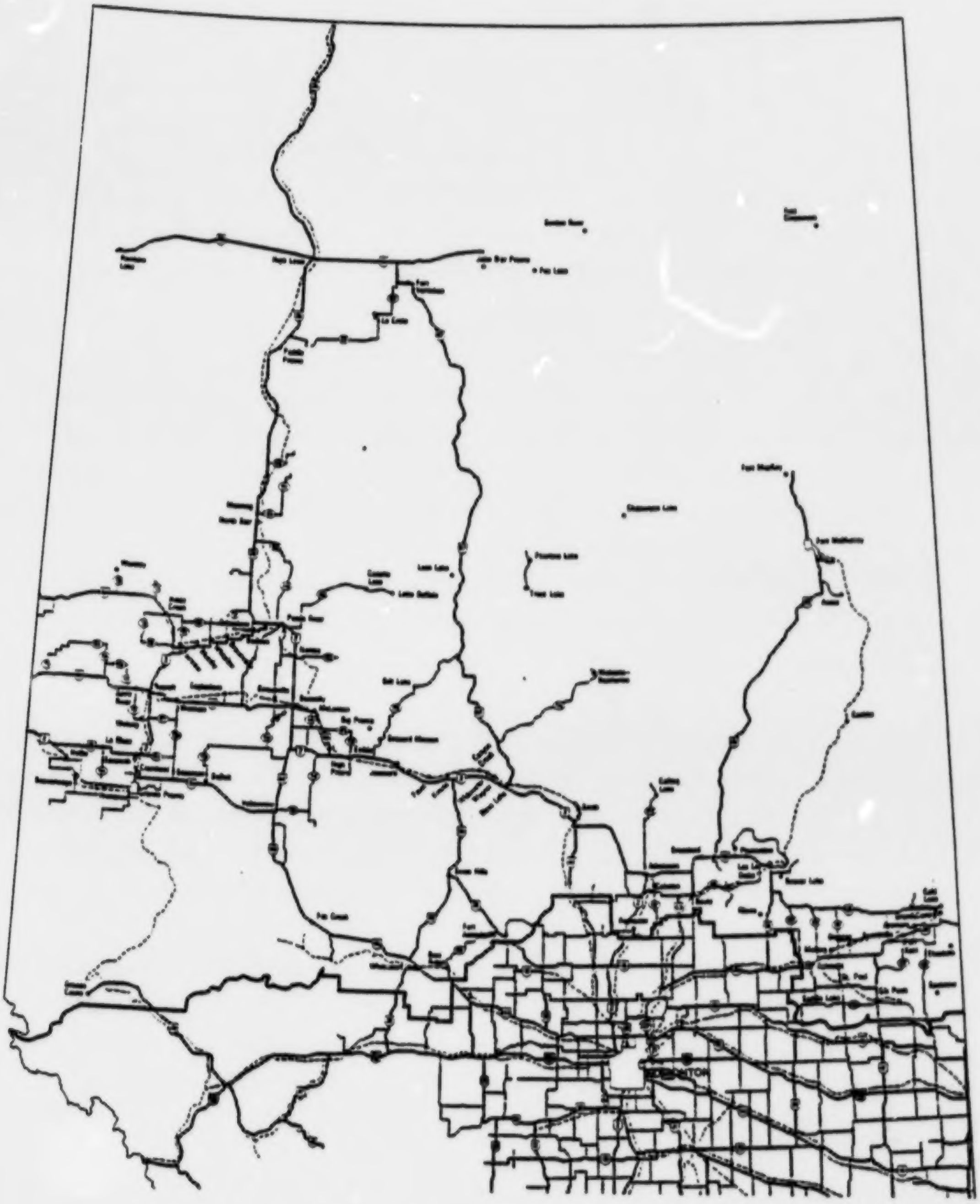
The spirit has been one of close co-operation and open communication with all of the school jurisdictions in the Northern Alberta Development Council (N.A.D.C.) area.

An extensive field program was conducted, based on close interaction with early school leavers, students in school, parents, teachers, administrators, local community organizations, and other central agencies having an interest in education. The potential benefits of the study for both educators and students in northern Alberta were emphasized throughout the project.

The culmination of the study was the development of remediation measures that address the factors associated with early school leaving in northern Alberta. The mitigative measures were discussed with educators prior to their finalization, and have been identified as being implementable and potentially effective.

2.1.2 History of the study

This study stems from a general concern about the early school leaver in northern Alberta. Several previous Northern Alberta Development Council activities have addressed the topic of education. Some of these are briefly described below;



NORTHERN ALBERTA DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL AREA

COMMUNITIES WITH POPULATION OVER 75 (1981 CANADA CENSUS)

PRIMARY HIGHWAY SECONDARY ROAD RAILWAY

PRODUCED BY THE ALBERTA BUREAU OF SURVEYING AND MAPPING © [illegible]

a) In 1980, the Northern Alberta Development Council commissioned a short term study as a preliminary step toward a comprehensive review of adult education. The report entitled "An Inventory of Native Training Programs in Northern Alberta", listed the programs available and the number of students enrolled in each one. The need for more information was identified.

b) In addition, the Northern Alberta Development Council commissioned a large scale study, entitled "Socio-Economic Overview of Northern Alberta". The findings indicated that the field of education and adult training was a topic of concern and interest to many northerners.

c) In 1980 the Council sponsored a major conference entitled "Alberta North in the '80s". A number of concerns and recommendations emerged which were directly relevant to the field of education.

d) As an outcome of the "Overview" study and Alberta North Conference, the Council commissioned a major review of adult education and training services in northern Alberta. The report noted that several of the adult education services in the north are impacted upon by early school leavers.

e) A follow-up workshop was held in June, 1981 on the topic of "Adult Education and Training in Northern Alberta". Attended by over 100 northerners, the workshop recommended several ways in which the education system could be improved. The delegates commented upon the inter-relationship of the K-12 system with adult education and training, and a number of specific recommendations were made.

f) During the 1981 Northland School Division review, the Northern Alberta Development Council was asked to meet with and to submit a report to the McNeil Commission. Most of the Council's viewpoints and recommendations were incorporated into the Commission's report.

g) The Northern Development Branch contacted the school jurisdictions in northern Alberta by telephone in order to identify rates of early school leaving. Six districts submitted information, indicating dropout rates of 14.7 per cent to 31 per cent during the 1980-81 school year.

In September of 1982, the Council, having established its priorities, met with the Premier. It was felt that some follow-up was necessary to the K-12 education issues identified in past research and conferences. Further, it was felt that one of the most important educational concerns pertained to the issue of the early school leaver. It was decided that a focused investigation of this subject should occur in 1983-84. It was further emphasized that practical and implementable mitigative measures should be identified from the study.

This interest and concern led to the commissioning of the present study.

2.1.3 Administration of the study

In establishing funding for the study, three organizations jointly sponsored the project. These were the Northland School Division, Alberta Education and the Northern Alberta Development Council.

A steering committee was established by the Council. The committee was selected to represent educators throughout the north as well as government departments having an interest in northern education. Representation was included from the following;

i) Northern Alberta Development Council
ii) Alberta Education (Planning Services)
iii) Alberta Advanced Education
iv) Fort McMurray Public School District
v) Fort Vermilion School Division
vi) Grande Prairie Public School District
vii) Lac La Biche School Division
viii) Lakeland Roman Catholic School District
ix) Northland School Division.

The initial task of the steering committee was to develop the terms of reference for the study, and to select a consultant through the tendering process. The committee met on an occasional basis to review the study progress, make critical decisions, and to provide the guidance necessary for the study to progress satisfactorily. It was also their function to review the work of the consultant, and to recommend acceptance of the final report.

2.2 Study Objectives

The main objectives of this project are:

i) to examine the situation of the early leaver in northern Alberta;

ii) to establish the extent of the early school leaver problem in northern Alberta;

iii) to develop and recommend a monitoring system which will enable the school system to trace students in their movements from one school to another and at the point of dropping out; and

iv) to develop and recommend practical and realistic mitigative measures to reduce the incidence of early school leaving.

The secondary objectives deal with specific content and process components which ensure satisfactory completion of the main objectives.

The content objectives are:

i) to review previous studies on the early leaver, with an emphasis on Alberta and the north;

ii) to develop a profile of the early school leaver;

iii) to determine the contributing factors to early school leaving which are internal and external to the school system;

iv) to examine the effects that specifically defined internal and external factors have upon early school leaving;

These factors include:

- a) curriculum;
- b) extracurricular school activities;
- c) lack of a local school at secondary levels;
- d) small schools (centralization vs. decentralization);
- e) mobile education;
- f) boarding and transportation;
- g) teacher recruitment and training;
- h) community;
- i) unconventional teaching models;
- j) family;
- k) ethnic and religious background;
- l) socio-economic background; and
- m) peer pressure.

v) to determine the social and economic effects of early school leaving on the north.

The process objectives are:

i) to create a working atmosphere of dialogue and openness with the participating school jurisdictions;

ii) to obtain general school information and specific school leaver data from all school jurisdictions in the Northern Alberta Development Council area;

iii) to conduct in-depth personal interviews in six sample districts with the following groups:

- a) early school leavers;
- b) school stayers;
- c) high risk students;
- d) parents of leavers;
- e) school administrators;
- f) school counsellors;
- g) teachers;
- h) community agencies and organizations; and
- i) other educators and central agencies with an interest in education;

iv) to establish a clear linkage between the causes of early school leaving and the recommended solutions; and

v) to organize and present workshops and conferences that focus on the sharing of ideas and assessing the practicality of the recommended solutions.

2.3 Methodology

2.3 Design

The terms of reference drawn up by the steering committee delineated the parameters of the study and identified specific research topics that were to be addressed by the consultants in their proposal. The proposal was reviewed by the steering committee and, through discussions between the client and consultant, the research methodology was agreed upon. The components of the project included the following (see Figure 2.3.1):

i) literature review;

ii) introductory workshops (Workshop I);

iii) general inventory of early school leaver records;

iv) interviews with students, educators, parents, and community organizations, as well as early school leavers;

v) data analysis and interpretation;

vi) development of recommended mitigative measures;

vii) follow-up workshops (Workshop II) to review measures; and

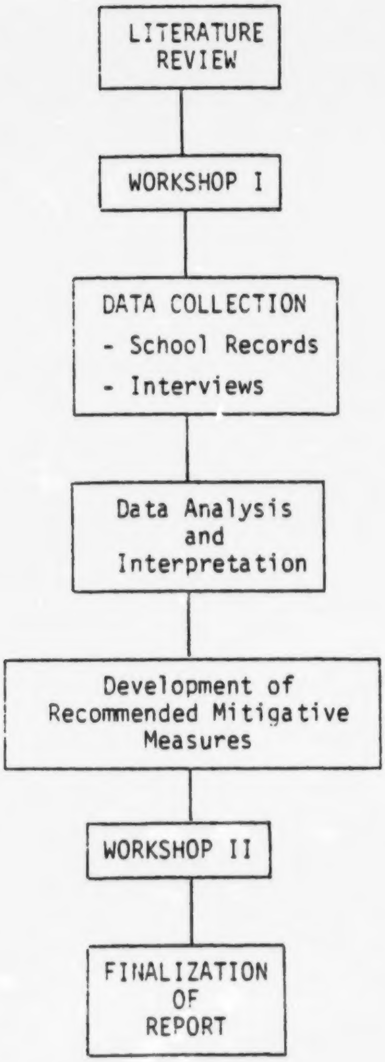
viii) finalization of early school leaver report.

2.3.1.1 Literature review

A detailed literature review to determine the information available from secondary sources was conducted. This review is presented in Appendix B. An overview of northern Alberta and Canadian research indicated that there was a paucity of data available on the topic of early school leavers. As a result, the most pertinent American data were included in the review.

FIGURE 2.3.1

STUDY METHODOLOGY



2.3.1.2 Introductory Workshop I

As mentioned earlier, local educator participation was considered an important factor in the data collection process. This input was required to ensure that the mitigative measures which resulted from the study were practical and implementable. Superintendents of all the educational jurisdictions involved in the study were invited to attend, along with one other educator designated as the district liaison officer or contact person for the study. The workshops presented a review of the literature, remediation programs and reference material. They were conducted by two researchers, in full day sessions in five northern Alberta communities - Grande Prairie, Peace River, Valleyview, St. Paul, and Bonnyville.

2.3.1.2.1 Goals of Workshop I

The goal of Workshop I was primarily one of involvement of the northern Alberta educational community. Educators were considered an important core group who would be cognizant of the problem of the early school leaver. The dialogue which was begun at the workshops continued afterward, focusing attention and heightened awareness on the early leaver. The sharing process also created a network of professional educators concerned about the early leaver and willing to co-operate with other schools. This co-operation was deemed essential for the establishment of a monitoring system which would track the leaver and enable the problem to be more accurately defined.

The workshop encouraged the educators to participate directly in the data collection and to provide interpretation of the information submitted by their jurisdictions. Workshop I, held at the onset of the data collection process (September, 1983) served to clarify the study's direction and elicit local support.

2.3.1.2.2 Workshop I structure and conclusions

The workshops were highly structured in format, with two facilitators conducting the sessions. The format was based on the goals outlined above and included a presentation of the literature review, study procedures, local initiative and networking.

The educators who attended the workshops expressed expectations for the study which were similar to those proposed in the terms of reference. They supported the concept of involvement and participation. Strong support for a monitoring system was generated as a result of the problems experienced by educators in collecting the early school leaver data requested for the study. The need for networking with other northern educators to share ideas and strategies for addressing the problem was also indicated. The educators also expressed the hope that the recommendations and practical mitigative measures which were generated in the study would be acted upon and implemented.

The five workshops were well received by the 48 educators who attended. Evaluation questionnaires which were circulated at the conclusion indicated a positive response, although expansion of future workshops to include other groups was recommended. The participants recognized the need for awareness in their home jurisdiction and agreed to work with the researchers in reviewing the remediation measures arising from the study.

2.3.2 Data collection

Both primary and secondary data sources were incorporated into the study. These are described below.

2.3.2.1 General information request

Information was requested by mail from all of the jurisdictions in the study area. These included 38 districts and 125 schools. The response rate was approximately 75 per cent.

The information request to the schools was detailed initially in writing. As described above, five Workshop I's were then held and clarification was provided as necessary to representatives from the jurisdictions. There were essentially two components to the general information request:

i) enrollment and program information from the schools; and

ii) specific information to be found in the cumulative folder of the identified early school leaver.

A general information form, to be self-administered by all schools with a grade level of 7 or more, was designed to obtain the specific enrollment and program information. In addition specific information was requested on each of the early school leavers who could be identified for the school years 1980-81, 1981-82, 1982-83. The request forms are reproduced in Appendix A.

2.3.2.2 In-depth interviews

A strong focus was put on primary data collection. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information about school leavers from various sources. To standardize the data collection, detailed questionnaires were designed for personal interviews with:

i) school leavers;
ii) stayers and high risk students;
iii) parents of leavers;
iv) school administrators and staff; and
v) community organizations and agencies.

Copies of the questionnaires may be found in Appendix A.

The questionnaires were initially designed by the consultant. The draft questionnaires and the information request forms were pre-tested in a K to 12 school in the study area, reviewed in considerable detail by the steering committee members, pretested and reviewed again prior to finalization.

The interviews were conducted by a team of five professionals with considerable working experience in schools and in the general area of education. Appointments were arranged with parents, early school leavers and community agencies and organizations. Interviews with students and teachers were conducted according to their availability during school hours. Interviews varied in length for each of the respondent categories from 40 to 90 minutes. All interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis and the interviewee was assured of confidentiality.

The following number of interviews were conducted:

school leavers	126
stayers	56
high risk students	50
parents	34
community organizations	13
teachers and administrators	54
Total	333

2.3.2.3 Six sample jurisdictions

The personal interviews were conducted in six identified jurisdictions in the north. The six areas were selected to provide a representative cross-section of schools in northern Alberta. The following is a listing of the location and grades of the schools in these jurisdictions.

Grande Prairie Public School District	- Montrose Junior High School (7-9) - Grande Prairie Composite High School (9-12)
Northland School Division	- Cadotte Lake School (1-8) - Fox Lake School (1-9) - Desmarais School (1-12) - Chipewyan Lakes School (1-8)
Fort Vermilion School Division	- Fort Vermilion School (1-12) - La Crete School (4-12) - Rainbow Lake School (1-12)
Lac La Biche School Division	- Lac La Biche Composite High School (9-12) - Plamondon School (1-12)
Fort McMurray Public School District	- Birchwood Junior High School (7-9) - Fort McMurray Composite High School (10-12)
Lakeland Roman Catholic School District	- Bonnyville Centralized High School (10-12) - Cold Lake School (1-12)

The majority of the schools were junior high schools or high schools which offered up to grade 12. In the Northland School Division, there were three schools in smaller centres, Cadotte Lake, Fox Lake, and Chipewyan Lakes which did not go beyond grade 8 or 9.

2.3.2.4 Central agency interviews

In addition to the above data collection, interviews were held with educational professionals from central agencies in Edmonton. They included representatives from the following:

i) The University of Alberta;
ii) Alberta Education;
iii) Alberta Advanced Education
iv) The Alberta Teachers' Association; and
v) The Alberta School Trustees' Association.

The focus of these interviews was to obtain a clear definition of functions and roles of the various agencies, and to discuss potential mitigative measures and their implementation. The roles of these agencies in the implementation of mitigative measures were discussed, as were regulatory aspects and implications and processes involved in changes.

2.3.3 Data analysis

All of the interview data and information obtained from the schools were coded to a computer format and the data entered in separate files for each of the interview groups. Simple frequencies and cross-tabulations were run for each of the files using the SPSS program format. In addition, factor and regression analyses were used to analyze the combined data files (see Appendix D). Descriptive comparisons were also made for the files.

The major areas of analysis included the following:

i) historical documentation of the situation over the last three years;

ii) profile of the early leaver;

iii) key factors that relate to the experience of early school leaving;

iv) factors that influence early leaving that are internal and external to the school system; and

v) the social and economic effects of early leaving on the north.

2.3.4 Review Workshop II

As a follow-up to the study, Workshop II was conducted in February, 1984. The purpose of Workshop II was to return to the northern educators with the results of the study. In particular, the educators at the workshops played a critical role in reviewing the proposed mitigative measures. Since the northern educators would have a key role in the implementation of the measures, it was felt that they would provide the best assessment of the study recommendations.

Two regional workshops were held: one in Grimshaw for representatives from the northwestern part of the province; and one in Lac La Biche for representatives from the northeastern part of the province.

At these workshops, the study background and process were reviewed by the consultants. They identified the main issues of concern arising from the study, and outlined a series of mitigative measures. Delegates to the workshop then met in discussion groups to evaluate the proposed measures.

The views of the various groups were conveyed to the consultants and the general audience by spokespersons. Delegates also submitted formal evaluation sheets which were reviewed by the consultants during the finalization of the recommended mitigative measures. The reactions of the educators served as one basis for ranking the relative importance and potential effectiveness of these measures for the final report presentation.

In addition a workshop was conducted in Peace River for the staff and school board members of the Northland School Division.

2.3.5 Recommended mitigative measures

The mitigative measures were the culminating point of this study. Everything was geared toward the development of practical measures which could be readily implemented and which would be effective in mitigating the situation of the early school leaver.

The ideas for these mitigative measures came from discussions with many administrators, educators, ex-students, parents, current students and representatives of community organizations. The interpretation of the tremendous amount of data gathered clearly identified factors contributing to early school leaving. From these, mitigative measures were recommended.

Some of the proposed mitigative measures are particularly applicable to certain areas of the north. For example, measures which could be implemented in a remote community such as Chipewyan Lakes might not be so relevant in a city such as Grande Prairie. In recognition of these differences, the most appropriate geographic locations are identified for the measures where distinctions are necessary.

The practicality of the mitigative measures was a concern. To help ensure that the recommendations could be realistically implemented, educators and all of the agencies involved in key implementation roles were consulted. Discussions centered on budget implications, regulations, the general practicality of implementation and perceived effectiveness of the measures. As indicated above, the recommended mitigative measures were also reviewed by educators during Workshop II.

2.3.6 Summary

The discussion in Chapter II has provided an introduction to the purpose, background, objectives, and methodology of the present study. In the following chapter (Chapter III) there is further elaboration of the study background, with a focus on the review of previous research.

III THE EARLY SCHOOL LEAVER SITUATION

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, an operational definition of the early school leaver is presented, and the key points arising from the review of relevant literature are discussed. Based on the study results, estimates of the incidence of early school leaving in Alberta are developed, and the social and economic impacts of early school leaving are outlined.

3.2 Definition of the early school leaver

It became apparent during the literature review and through a general assessment of the situation that there is no standard definition of the early school leaver. The lack of definition and subsequent variation in measuring the incidence of school leaving made it impossible to compare data from various sources or to determine the extent of the situation.

The operational definition of the early school leaver for the present study was determined in Workshop I. For purposes of data collection it was decided to accept the following definition of the early school leaver:

> *"A student who left school before completing the minimum requirements for a grade 12 diploma who did not enroll immediately in a post-secondary, academic upgrading, correspondence or apprenticeship program."*

This definition included students who interrupted their studies as well as students who left the educational system permanently. For example, a student who dropped out of grade 9 for one year and then returned would be considered an early school leaver. Similarly, a student who left high school and did not immediately enroll in another institution would be categorized as a dropout. Many students identified as early school leavers terminated their schooling because schools in their community did not go beyond the junior high or early high school level.

People who interrupt their education were included because, in many cases, they simply sit idle during this period and, as a consequence, represent a cost to society. Their reinstatement in the education system also requires resources which would not be necessary if their education had been continuous.

3.3 Summary of the literature review

The complete literature review and bibliography are presented in Appendix B. A summary of the major points is presented in this section.

3.3.1 Introduction

Early school leaving has been an educational concern for many years. Researchers in Canada and the United States first emphasized the problem in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The reasons for this concern include the following:

- rapid technological advances; unskilled and semi-skilled jobs are decreasing in number while highly skilled jobs are hard to fill. Unemployment among young dropouts is high;
- increased disparities between racial minorities and other members of society; equality of opportunity becomes more difficult to believe;
- social costs; the costs of foregone income, foregone revenue to the government and social welfare costs attributable to students leaving school prior to graduation are high;
- inflation of educational credentials; a grade 12 diploma is now used as a screening device for many manual jobs;
- the increasing urbanization of society; social mobility and economic survival require an education and an understanding of social conventions which school provides; and
- the moral obligation of schools to educate applies to all students.

The decision to leave school will have profound effects on the individual's personal attainment as well as his contribution to society. Early school leavers experience a higher unemployment rate, lower levels of earnings, a higher rate of juvenile delinquency and crime, and a greater need for public assistance of all types (Howard and Anderson, 1978; Jones, 1977; Kaplan and Luck, 1977; Maurer, 1982; Schreiber, 1967).

3.3.2 The problem

The literature review indicates that the extent of early school leaving in North America varies from 0 to about 100 per cent for certain groups. The calculation of early school leaving tends to vary from study to study, confounding the comparison of data.

A 1976 Alberta Education study from the Data Processing Services Branch shows the following:

- 140,030 students were enrolled in grades 9-12 in all Alberta and Northwest Territories schools in the 1974-75 school year;
- 50,553 students discontinued during or following the 1974-75 school year; and
- of the 50,553 students who discontinued, 22,399 had earned a high school diploma, 28,154 had not.

These data indicate a dropout rate of 20 per cent for all grade 9 to 12 students in Alberta and the Northwest Territories during the 1974-75 school year.

Scragg (1968), in a longitudinal study of all grade 9 students in Alberta, reported that 40 per cent left school before graduation. Indian students in Northland School Division were estimated to leave school at a 97.7 per cent rate by grade 12 (McCarthy, 1971), and in another study of Alberta Indian students followed from Grade 1, 80 per cent had left school by Grade 11 (Saigaonkar, 1975). In a recent study of school leavers in

Saskatchewan, Pawlovich (1983) reported a range of 0 - 46 per cent with an average leaver rate of 15 per cent for all schools in the province.

In the United States, in 1970, 70 per cent of students entering grade 5 stayed until graduation; this proportion increased to 78 per cent in 1977 and by 1979 it appears this stabilized and possibly even reversed itself. (American Association of School Administrators, 1979; Jones, 1977). Considerable variation among races was reported (Le Brasseur and Freark, 1982).

3.3.3 Early leaver characteristics identified from the literature review

The literature review delineated the following factors as the most powerful predictors of the early school leaver:

- lower socio-economic background (Bachman, Green and Wirtamen, 1972; Jones, 1977);
- early failure in school (Schreiber, 1964);
- academic underachievement and poor performance (Poole, 1978);
- high levels of absenteeism and persistent tardiness (Sharples et al, 1979);
- low self-concept and achievement motivation (Bachman, Green and Wirtamen, 1972; Tseng, 1972);
- low family encouragement, especially with respect to educational and job aspirations (Poole, 1978; Tseng, 1972);
- trouble with school authorities and discipline problems (Zamanzadeh and Prince, 1978);
- lack of participation in extracurricular activities (Bell, 1967); and
- alienation (Schreiber, 1967).

Most educators would agree that the influence of the home is a critical factor in early school leaving. The review of the literature supports this long-held contention. A number of family variables are related to high levels of school leaving (Kaplan and Luck, 1977; Schreiber, 1967; Zamanzadeh and Prince, 1978):

- low socio-economic status;
- minority membership;
- "family tradition" of early school leaving among siblings;
- mothers and fathers with low education levels;
- limited study space;
- financial need;
- large family size; and
- limited home stability.

Schreiber (1967) estimated that 70 per cent of the mothers and 80 per cent of the fathers of the dropout population have never finished school, and the low education levels of the dropout's parents are confirmed in the research of Poole (1978), Tseng (1972) and Curley (1971).

Most leavers have negative attitudes towards school and their relationships with teachers (Poole, 1978; Thornburg, 1975) and do not participate in extracurricular activities (Cervantes, 1965; Howard and Anderson, 1978; and Young and Reich, 1974). Alcohol and drug abuse among early leavers is greater than that of stayers (Annis and Watson, 1975; Zamanzadeh and Prince, 1978). However, personality characteristics and intelligence have been investigated as factors in early school leaving with inconclusive results.

It has been determined that dropping out of school is correlated with academic achievement in that a significant proportion of early school leavers have been retained for one or more grades and many leavers are underachievers. Schreiber (1964) estimated that 50 per cent of early school leavers have been retained in a grade at least once, and if a student fails grades 1 or 2, there is an 80 per cent chance he will not graduate. In a study of 2,000 students across the United States, Bachman, Green and Wirtamen (1972) estimated a 40 per cent dropout rate among those who have failed a grade. compared to a 10 per cent rate among students who have not failed any grades.

3.3.4 The decision to leave school early

Two studies which provide information on the distribution of early school leavers according to their reason for leaving school are summarized in the literature review. Poole (1978) reported the following reasons:

- dislike of, or disinterest in school	33%
- irrelevance of schooling in terms of occupational plans	31%
- inability/unwillingness to cope with more schooling	19%
- financial problems	6%
- influence of friends	6%
- parental or school pressure to leave	5%

The Toronto Board of Education study of 544 dropouts, conducted by Young and Reich (1974), revealed the following distribution of reasons among early school leavers:

- the classic dropout, who has poor attitudes toward school, poor attendance record and is failing subjects	23%
- work oriented dropout, who prefers work to school	53%
- homemaker dropout, who is oriented toward marriage and family	6%
- family supporter dropout, whose parents need his financial help	7%
- cultural isolate dropout, who has language problems and is generally a recent immigrant	2%
- intellectual elite, who feels the school system is irrelevant to his needs and has renounced the system	3%

Parents were the major source of advice for early school leavers in their discussions about leaving school (Larter and Eason, 1978; Poole, 1978; Young and Reich, 1974). In over half the cases, parents agreed with or did not oppose the student's decision. Approximately three quarters of the early school leavers did not make use of school or community resources in their decision making.

In their longitudinal study involving 3,300 early school leavers across the United States, Combs and Cooley (1968) found that within four years, 57 per cent of leavers regretted their decision to leave.

3.3.5 Mitigative measures

The literature on mitigative measures for reducing the incidence of early school leavers can be organized according to five sections:

- curriculum;
- staff;
- reducing absenteeism;
- special programs; and
- home and community involvement.

The literature review in Appendix B provides an in-depth discussion of the measures which are summarized below.

An underlying theme runs through all these programs and is best summarized by S.M. Miller (see Schreiber (1967)): "the obligation is not on the people who are different, but is rather on the professional, to learn to deal with a wide variety of students."

3.3.5.1 Curriculum

Programs that can be initiated by the school system to reduce the extent of early school leaving include improving the curriculum. Zeller (1966) suggests a number of ways of accomplishing this:

- ensure the curriculum meets the students' needs in the social, vocational, academic or remedial areas;
- stress reading, writing and communication skills;
- use small groups within the classroom;
- use innovative teaching techniques and devices;
- have grades incorporate individual progress;
- offer vocational programs at an earlier grade level;
- include instruction on adult concerns such as employment, marriage, budgeting, family responsibilities; and
- provide students with programs about the importance of education.

3.3.5.2 School staff

Zeller (1966) advises the use of the following techniques by administrative and teaching staff:

- have the most enthusiastic and eager teachers work with high risk students;
- focus on motivating pupil learning;
- use teachers and staff who are child-oriented rather than course-oriented;
- have sufficient counsellors and begin a counselling program for high risk students not later than grade 7;
- help high risk students with acquiring social acceptability through special school activities;
- establish mandatory exit counselling for students leaving school; and
- counsel students who have left school recently.

3.3.5.3 Reducing absenteeism

A number of programs for reducing the rate of early school leaving approach the problem by focusing on improving the attendance of high risk students. According to Kaplan and Luck (1977), there are six basic methods for accomplishing this:

- enforce compulsory attendance;
- institute remedial, vocational and work study programs;
- improve rapport among students, teachers, parents and school administration;
- provide guidance and counselling programs; and
- co-ordinate the effort of schools and public welfare authorities.

3.3.5.4 Special programs

A number of special programs to help the high risk student can be integrated into the established curriculum. These programs can run from preschool to high school, including:

- preschool and nursery programs set up to orient the deprived child and help him adjust to the school years ahead;

- remedial reading and math programs at the elementary school and junior high school levels;
- work-study programs with local businessmen, closely supervised and starting at the grade 9 level; and
- schooling for pregnant students.

3.3.5.5 Home and community involvement

Greater involvement by the student's parents, especially if they seem not to care or are fearful of the school, can be an effective tool in reducing the early school leaving problem. Community support and volunteer groups can provide help in implementing and supporting programs such as:

- providing parents with information on the student and programs;
- making the school a friendly, welcome place for parents to visit;
- involving parents in after-school and evening programs in which they can participate; developing adult education programs;
- using home-school co-ordinators that visit the home; and
- involving public welfare and health agencies, churches, the courts and volunteer organizations.

3.3.5.6 Proposals for Native education

As the incidence of early school leaving is especially high among Native students in Alberta, the proposals advanced in the literature for combatting this are provided below (Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (1972); Nash (1978); LeBrasseur and Freark (1982)).

- Teachers should be knowledgeable and understanding of Natives and accept cultural differences. Parents of the students should select the teachers. Native para-professionals can be used to help in the schools;
- Students should attend kindergarten to grade 9 on the reserve. Students then get the psychological and sociological support of the family and community;

- When secondary school students are bused to the school, extracurricular activities should be scheduled so they can participate;
- Integration should be reciprocal, with non-Native students attending reserve schools, as well as Natives attending non-reserve schools;
- The curriculum should include Native content;
- A cultural and educational centre should be established to aid students in recognizing their background and educational interest; and
- Guidance and counselling programs for Natives should be provided.

3.3.6 Overview

This section has provided an overview of the literature related to early school leaving. The literature review was undertaken in the initial stages of the study in order to obtain an understanding of the early school leaver, and factors associated with dropping out of school. This background information provided some direction for the present study by identifying issues which required investigation. An overview of mitigative measures employed in other settings was also obtained.

The review of the literature revealed that little information was available about early school leaving in Alberta. As a result, it was necessary to focus on studies undertaken in other parts of Canada and the United States. This lack of information underlines the need for early school leaver research focussing on the Alberta context.

3.4 Incidence of early school leaving in northern Alberta

In this section, estimates of the incidence of early school leaving in northern Alberta are developed. Measuring the incidence of early school leaving depends to a large extent on the definition adopted and the process employed in measurement. For example, are all those who do not complete high school counted as leavers, including those who go to other educational institutions? Do you count those who are retained because of lack of ability and leave because they soon find themselves considerably older than their classmates? Do you count those who are expelled?

Additional questions deal with the time base of measurement and the grade levels. Does a percentage dropout rate refer to the number who drop out in one year or to those that start grade 1 but never make it to grade 12? For rates to be comparable they must cover identical grade levels. A high school dropout rate is generally much higher than a junior high school dropout rate.

Consistent with the definition of the early school leaver which was accepted for this study, the incidence estimates which are presented below exclude students who transfer to other institutions and those who do not have the ability to graduate. The leaver estimates which are derived measure annual rates of dropout unless otherwise specified. For the purpose of this study, leaver information was solicited only for students at a grade 7 level or better since educators consulted in the study considered dropout rates below this level to be very small.

The data collected during the course of this study do not lend themselves well to accurate measurement of early school leaving in northern Alberta. This is primarily because of incompleteness, related to the following two factors:

i) Not all of the schools responded to the request for information about students who had left school. Thirty-eight school jurisdictions were asked to provide information on a total of 142 schools. Information was received from only 107 schools.

ii) Many schools could not accurately identify their school leavers. They had to guess the status of ex-students and did not report many of which they were unsure. School records of 2,063 leavers provided an indication of the time of year at which they had left school. Of these, only 16 per cent were identified as leaving at the end of the year. The remaining 84 per cent is probably an accurate reflection of the number of students who drop out during the year since they are easily identified. The year-end, summer holiday, dropout is much harder to identify. Alberta Education data (1976) show that this group actually comprises 75 per cent.of total dropouts.

On the basis of the above, it would appear that the 2,671 early leavers reported for the last three years is a gross underestimate of the actual number of students who left school early in northern Alberta over that period. The data do not permit the calculation of dropout rates that have a high degree of confidence.

In the series of workshops that were held in the fall of 1983 (Workshop I), the school administrators were asked to estimate the annual drop-out rates in their schools and school districts. There was considerable variation in their responses:

- 10 - 15 per cent per year over grades 7 - 12;
- 25 per cent over the whole span of schooling (i.e. 25 per cent of students who begin grade 1 never make to to grade 12);
- 15 per cent per year from grades 7 to 12;
- 12 - 15 per cent per year over grades 7 - 12;
- 15 - 16 per cent per year at senior high level;
- 10 per cent per year at senior high school;
- less than 5 per cent per year at the junior high level.

Estimates supplied by Northlands School Division (1983) suggested that between 92 and 99 percent of their students who enter grade 1 never graduate from grade 12.

The incidence of early school leaving varies considerably at various grade levels. In general, most of the educators who attended felt that their dropout rates were between 10 per cent and 15 per cent per year at the senior high level; that they were 2 to 3 per cent at the junior high level and virtually non-existent at the elementary level. There were some very notable exceptions to this. Some of the stable agricultural rural areas, often with a large French-Canadian population, had very low dropout rates at the junior and senior high levels. These rates were said to be less than 5 per cent per year. At the other extreme very high dropout rates were expressed. These came from the more remote areas of the north with high Native population levels. They also came from areas where religious/ethnic groups are concentrated. Specifically, these include Mennonite groups and White Russians, who may not value education and may view it as a conflict with their way of life. In these three cases, dropout rates are extremely high at the junior high level, estimated at 33 per cent per year averaged over grades 7, 8 and 9. Very few students make it to senior high school.

At first glance the above information does not appear to point to a very significant problem; a 10 - 20 per cent dropout rate per year is not very high. However to appreciate the magnitude of the situation it is interesting to look at this from a different perspective.

If it is accepted that 10 to 20 per cent of all students in grades 9 to 12 leave school in any one year, then what does this mean in terms of the total number of students who never graduate? The following provides an estimate of dropout rates based on extrapolation of existing information.

Detailed calculations for annual dropout rates of 10 per cent, 15 per cent and 20 per cent result in overall dropout rates of 30 per cent, 41 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. In other words, if the annual dropout rate for grades 9 to 12 is 15 per cent, then 41 per cent of students enrolled in September in grade 9 will drop out before completing grade 12.

As evidenced in in Table 3.4.1, some students drop out prior to grade 9. If this is taken into consideration, then the overall dropout rate is larger than indicated above.

TABLE 3.4.1

Percentage of Leavers by Last Grade Completed[1]

Grade Level	Percentage (%)
4	1
5	2
6	5
7	9
8	14
9	28
10	24
11	18
	100%[2]

Based on this information, the following are estimates of the extent of the early school leaver problem in northern Alberta:

i) the annual dropout rates for grades 7 to 12 are between 10 and 20 per cent across the north;

ii) this annual rate varies considerably among ethnic groups and localities. The variation is estimated to be between 5 and 33 per cent; and

iii) it is estimated that, across the north, at least 50 per cent of students who begin grade 1 do not complete grade 12. There is a

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[1] Source: Information on school leavers was requested from all schools in the Northern Alberta Development Council Area (N.A.D.C.) with grade levels of 7 or higher. The schools reported information on 2,671 students who had dropped out in the previous three school years (1980-83).

[2] Tables may not total exactly 100% due to rounding of percentage figures.

> large variance depending on school localities. In remote and isolated communities this figure is estimated at 85 to 97 per cent. In urban and rural areas, it varies between 25 and 45 per cent.

These figures are summarized in Table 3.4.2.

TABLE 3.4.2

Extrapolated School Dropout Rates in Northern Alberta

	Annual (%)	Grade 9 to 12 Cumulative (%)
Remote/Isolated	15-30	85-97
Urban and Rural	10-20	25-45

In appears that across the north, 50 per cent of the students apparently are not making it through the school system. Whether the early school leavers ultimately return to school is beyond the scope of the study. Nevertheless, the severity of the problem underlines the importance of developing and implementing measures to reduce the number of school dropouts in the north. The limitations in the school data on early school leavers also point out the need for the development of a monitoring system to track students who leave school before graduation (see Appendix E).

3.4.1 Perspectives on the problem

Educators and community members were asked the following question in the interviews. "Do you have a significant dropout problem in your school or system?" The responses were as follows:

i) 15 out of 16 community agency representatives stated early school leavers were a significant problem in their community; and

ii) 80 per cent of 54 teachers and administrators interviewed felt that the dropout is a significant problem in their school or district.

The incidence estimates combined with the reactions from Workshop I and other discussions that were held throughout the north, point strongly to the conclusion that there is a dropout problem and that it is significant.

When it is considered that approximately 50 per cent of all students who begin school in northern Alberta apparently do not make it to grade 12, then we can appreciate the significance of the problem.

3.5 Social and economic impacts of early school leaving in northern Alberta

3.5.1 General background

In 1972, the United States Senate Select Committee on Equal Educational Opportunity published a report entitled, "The Effect of Dropping Out", which estimated the costs associated with males in the 25 to 34 age category who had left school in 1969 before graduating (Jones, 1977). The study estimated the following costs:

- $237 billion in income to the men;
- $ 71 billion in foregone revenue to government;
- $ 3 billion per year in welfare expenditure.

The cost of having these men finish high school would have been only $40 billion. The study concluded that "each dollar generated for the social investment in education generates six dollars over the lifetime of the group."

Although the cost estimates derived by the U.S. Senate Select Committee would not be comparable in magnitude to those experienced in northern Alberta, this study does provide two useful insights:

- the costs associated with early school leaving are high to both society and the individual; and
- monetary investment in education generates a high rate of return.

A significant amount of research on the effects of early school leaving (Howard and Anderson, 1978; Kaplan and Luck, 1977; Maurer, 1982; Schreiber, 1967) indicates that leavers experience a higher unemployment rate than school graduates. In times of high unemployment the dropout, who is usually an unskilled worker, is one of the first to be terminated. Upward mobility on the job and attainment of higher status jobs are more difficult for the early school leaver than the graduate. It has been suggested that, in the long term, a number of factors will aggravate the costs of early school leaving: the number of jobs available for unskilled workers is decreasing each year while the number of people available to fill these jobs is increasing, and the level of educational attainment by the general population is rising. The latter factor results in a "credentials" inflation, where employers with jobs requiring little skill are demanding high school graduation, and jobs previously open to high school graduates are now open only to post-secondary graduates.

In some situations, however, early school leavers do not necessarily experience higher levels of unemployment. In an economy that is booming, as in northern Alberta in the late 1970's, the school dropout can find jobs and, in fact, can serve a valuable role in easing labour shortages. Or, if the school leaver upgrades his skills through programs such as vocational education, his chances of experiencing unemployment are reduced.

Two other economic relationships have been shown to be related to early school leaving: the dropout experiences a lower level of income and a greater need for public assistance of all types (Jones, 1977; Schreiber, 1967).

In addition to the potential economic costs associated with the phenomenon, there are potential social costs. These include a higher rate of juvenile delinquency and crime among dropouts, lower self-esteem, frustration and lack of fulfillment, and feelings of alienation from the mainstream culture (Kaplan and Luck, 1977; Schreiber, 1967: Zamanzadeh and Prince, 1978).

Because the dropout incidence tends to be higher among certain racial groups such as Natives (Zamanzadeh and Prince, 1978), and is higher among young people whose parents have dropped out (Schreiber, 1967), there are other societal implications. Intergenerational mobility is reduced, racial inequalities are perpetuated and the disparities between society's "haves" and "have nots" are maintained and perhaps increased.

Potential positive social impacts associated with early leaving are improved mental health of the individual leaver who could not adjust to the school environment, and a better quality of education for the school stayer, as resources are freed to provide more for the remaining students.

3.5.2 Northern Alberta

1981 Census data were used to obtain some basic insights into the phenomenon of early school leaving in northern Alberta. Even taking into account the younger age-group profile in the Northern Alberta Development Council area compared to that for the province as a whole, the level of schooling is lower in northern Alberta, with a greater proportion of the population having less than grade 9 education (21 per cent for northern Alberta compared to 13 per cent for the province).

TABLE 3.5.1

Level of Schooling for Northern Alberta and Alberta Populations: Percentage of Population Having Specific Education Levels

	Northern Alberta	Alberta
	Per cent of Population	Per cent of Population
Less than Grade 9	21	13
Grades 9 to 12		
-without certificate	34	32
-with certificate	10	11
Trade certificate	3	3
Other non-university		
- without certificate	5	7
- with certificate	15	16
University - without degree	6	9
- with degree	6	10
	100%	100%

Source: 1981 Canada Census. Census Divisions 12 and 15 were used as an approximation for the Northern Alberta Development Council area as enumeration area data for C.D. 13 was not available. Only the northern portion of C.D. 13 is included in Northern Alberta Development Council boundaries.

Unemployment rates in Census Division 12 and 15 (4.8 per cent) are higher than provincial averages (3.7 per cent) for both males and females (see Table 3.5.2). The unemployment rates in both northern Alberta and the province as a whole are higher among those who leave school prior to graduation than among those who complete high school (see Table 3.5.2). Furthermore, unemployment tends to be higher among dropouts in the north than in the province as a whole (for example, 6.7 per cent compared to 4.8 per cent). Labour force participation rates are also lower for the leaver than for the graduates, likely reflecting a significant amount of hidden unemployment.

Average family income in northern Alberta ($27,568/year) is lower than the provincial average ($30,957/year) (Table 3.5.3). Average family income is related to level of schooling, with higher levels of schooling generating greater income (see Table 3.5.3).

The Statistics Canada census data reported in Tables 3.5.2 and 3.5.3 support the findings of higher unemployment rates and lower incomes among early school leavers in northern Alberta. This pattern is consistent with the socio-economic findings reported elsewhere, as described in the review of literature.

3.6 Summary

In Chapter III, the discussion has focused on developing the background for the study. Most of the material was drawn from a review of relevant literature. Previous studies were summarized which focussed on the typical characteristics of the early school leaver, reasons for leaving school. socio-economic impacts of leaving, and an overview of mitigative measures used in other contexts. In addition, an indication of the extent of the early school leaver problem was provided based on information from previous research in Alberta and other locations, as well as discussions with northern Alberta educators.

TABLE 3.5.2

Labour Force Activity and Highest Level of Schooling Attained

Level of Schooling	Northern Alberta Participation Rate (%)	Northern Alberta Unemployment Rate (%)	Alberta Participation Rate (%)	Alberta Unemployment Rate (%)
Less than Grade 9	46.0	7.1	46.2	4.7
Grades 9-13 without certificate or diploma	62.2	6.7	64.6	4.8
With high school certificate or diploma	74.1	3.0	76.8	3.3
Total Population	(67.8)	(4.8)	(71.7)	(3.7)

Source: Statistics Canada 1981 Census.

TABLE 3.5.3

Average Family Income and Highest Level of Schooling of House[illegible]Head

	Northern Alberta $/Annum	Alberta $/Annum
Less than Grade 9	20,567	23,707
Grades 9-13 without certificate	26,591	28,097
Grades 9-13 with certificate	27,801	29,673
Other non-university	30,681	30,926
Some university	31,737	33,274
University degree	38,859	44,395
All families	27,568	30,957

Source: Statistics Canada 1981 Census.

Estimates of present dropout rates in northern Alberta were also extrapolated from the study data.

In the following chapter of the report (Chapter IV) the study findings are discussed in detail. Primary data obtained from school recores, and from interviews with six groups are presented.

IV PRIMARY DATA COMPONENTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter of the report summarizes the study findings. Seven data sets were obtained in the data collection process. These include the following:

i) Data from 2,671 school records of early school leavers;

ii) Data from interviews with:
- early school leavers;
- students who were stayers;
- high-risk students;
- parents;
- educators; and
- community representatives.

Each of these data sets is discussed in sequence, in the following sections of the report. Where possible the format of the sections are similar, to facilitate comparisons between data sets.

4.1.1 Early school leaver general information request

The data reported in this section were obtained from early school leaver information request forms. These forms compiled information on the socio-demographic characteristics and school performance of early school leavers.

The intent of this section is to provide a general profile of the early school leaver. Since 2,671 student records were involved, the data are considered to provide a reasonably accurate indication of basic school leaver characteristics. This section is divided into three topics:

1. Socio-demographic characteristics of the early school leaver;
2. School leaving characteristics, including timing and reasons for leaving;
3. School history and performance.

4.1.2 Socio-demographic characteristics of school leavers

The school leavers were fairly evenly divided between males and females. Fifty-four per cent of the leavers were male; forty-six per cent were female.

Of 2,669 early leaver forms which reported location of residence, 336 (13 per cent) indicated that leavers were from remote and isolated areas; 951 (36 per cent) were from large urban areas, 864 (32 per cent) were from smaller urban centres and 519 (19 per cent) were from rural areas. However, these data may reflect, in part, variations in reporting from the various school districts, and may not provide an accurate picture of the geographical distribution of early school leavers.

Of 2,223 cases in which ethnicity was reported, 34 per cent of the leavers were of Native ancestry and 64 per cent were Caucasian or another race.

Native school leavers were somewhat more likely to be female (38 per cent) than male (31 per cent), while Caucasian school leavers were somewhat more likely to be male (67 per cent versus 60 per cent for females).

The reported occupations of the parents are summarized in Table 4.1.1. A large proportion of the fathers had farming (32 per cent) or construction occupations (20 per cent), while many mothers were housewives (51 per cent).

TABLE 4.1.1

Parents' Occupations: The Percentage of Parents in Each Occupational Category

Occupation	Father (%)	Mother (%)
Farming	32	8
Clerical	2	5
Tech-Voc-Para-Professional	2	3
Government	1	4
Service	8	8
Construction	20	8
Housewife	0	51
Other	35	13
	100%	100%

Example: 32 per cent of the fathers and 8 per cent of the mothers had farming occupations.

Note: Tables presented in this Chapter may not total exactly 100 per cent due to rounding of percentage figures.

4.1.3 School leaving characteristics: timing and reasons for leaving

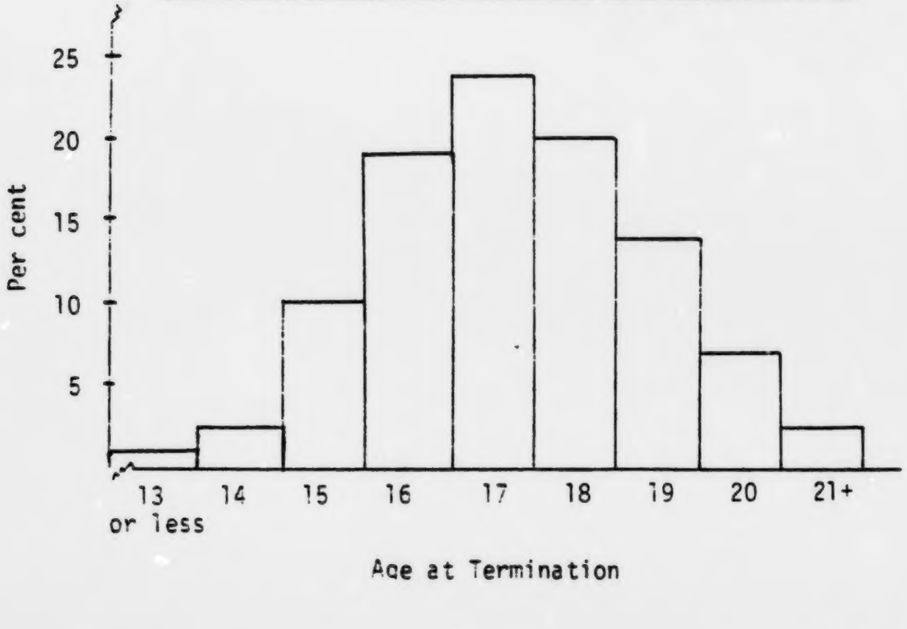
In this part, various factors which describe the school leaving characteristics of the sample are summarized. These include the age at termination, the last full grade attended, the school year of termination and reasons for leaving.

The age at which schooling was terminated is reported in Figure 4.1.1. The incidence of early school leaving appears to reach a peak at age 17. Three ages, i.e. 16, 17 and 18 years, account for 63 per cent of all school leavers.

The age at which students leave school may be affected by several factors. One important factor is the area in which the student resides (see Table 4.1.2). Students who left school before the age of 16 were more likely to be from remote/isolated or rural locations. Twenty-eight per cent of the leavers from remote locations left before the age of 16 as did 19 per cent of leavers from rural locations. Students who left at the ages of 16 or 17 were more likely to be from small urban areas. Students from large urban centres tended to be older when they left school (i.e. 18 years or over).

FIGURE 4.1.1

Age at Termination:
The Percentage of Leavers Who Left at Specific Ages



The age of termination was not related to the sex of the student, since there were similar proportions of males and females leaving at each age level. Ethnicity did not appear to be consistently related to age of termination. The proportions of Natives and Caucasians who left school were quite similar at each age level, with two exceptions. At age 15, there were more Natives leaving than Caucasians, while Caucasians were more likely to leave at an older age (18 to 20 years).

TABLE 4.1.2

Age at Termination By Location:
The Percentage of Leavers In Each Location Who Left at Specific Ages

Age	Location			
	Remote/ Isolated (n=322) (%)	Large Urban (n=917) (%)	Small Urban (n=858) (%)	Rural (n=510) (%)
13	1	0	1	2
14	8	1	1	4
15	19	5	9	13
16	19	14	23	19
17	23	17	30	24
18	18	23	18	18
19	7	21	12	12
20	3	12	4	5
21	1	5	1	1
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Example: 8 per cent of the leavers from remote locations left school at age 14. This compared with 1 per cent of leavers from large urban centres, 1 per cent of the leavers from small urban centres, and 4% of the leavers from rural areas.

Note: Compare percentages for each age group across the columns.

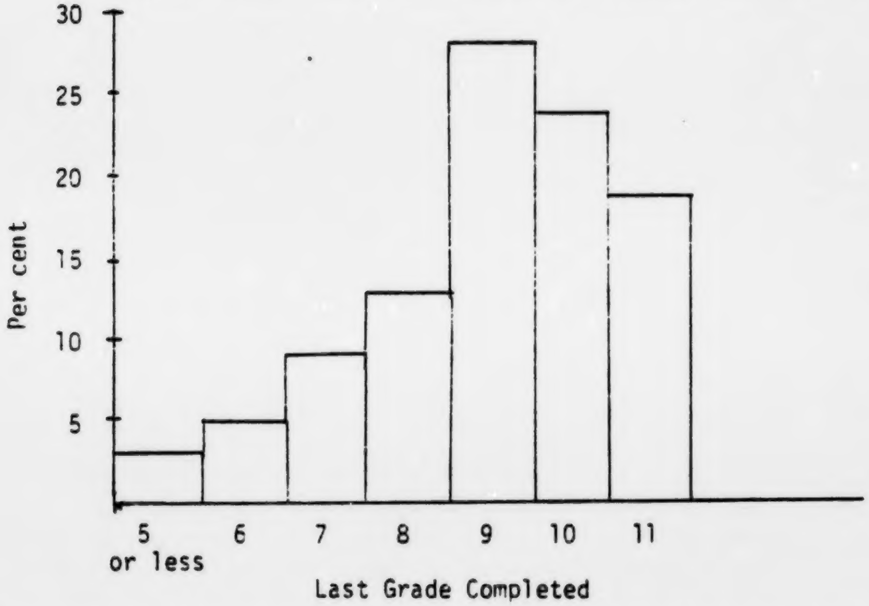
The age at termination was also found to be related to some of the school characteristics of the student. Those who did not participate in extra-curricular activities were more likely to leave at 16 years or younger, while participants tended to be older when they left school.

No differences in age of termination were noted between students who were identified as discipline problems in the school records and those who were not.

The last full grade which leavers had completed was also recorded. These data are reported in Figure 4.1.2. Eight per cent of all leavers did not go beyond elementary levels; fifty-seven per cent did not go beyond junior high level. Forty-two per cent reported at least one senior high grade. Grades 9 and 10 appear to be the peak grades associated with school leaving.

FIGURE 4.1.2

Last Grade of Completion:
The Percentage of Leavers Leaving at Each Grade Level



The relationship of the last full grade completed and the age of the students at the time of leaving are summarized in Table 4.1.3.

TABLE 4.1.3

Grade at Termination By Age: The Age Distribution of Students Leaving School at Each Grade Level

Grade at Termination	Age at Termination							
	14 or less	15	16	17	18	19	20	20+
6 or less	17	23	20	23	13	4	1	0
7	12	23	22	23	16	4	1	0
8	4	13	29	25	15	11	2	1
9	1	12	23	24	20	14	4	3
10	0	3	18	23	23	18	11	4
11	0	0	3	24	22	24	16	11
12	0	0	0	0	27	46	18	9

Example: 17 per cent of those who left at grade 6 or less were 14 years of age; 23 per cent were 15 years of age.

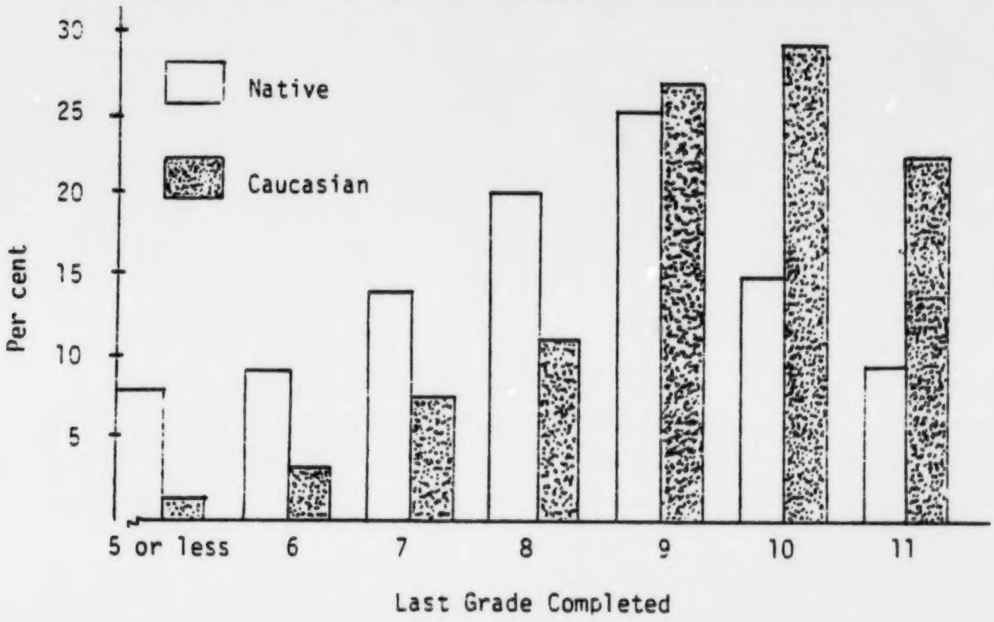
For each grade level, the percentage of leavers who fall into each age category is shown. Most students who leave at grade 7 or less are between 15 and 17 years of age; those leaving at grade 8 or 9 are likely to be 16 or 17 years. Those leaving grade 10 are most likely to be 17 or 18 years of age; grade 11 dropouts between the ages of 17 and 19, and grade 12 leavers most likely to be 19 years of age.

If the typical grade 7 student is 12 or 13 years of age, these figures suggest that a large proportion of school leavers may be several years behind in their schooling before dropping out.

As with age of termination, the last grade completed did not vary significantly with the sex of the student. With respect to ethnicity, it may be seen from Figure 4.1.3 that the last grade completed varied noticeably according to the ethnic background.

FIGURE 4.1.3

Last Full Grade Completed By Ethnicity:
The Percentage of Leavers in Each Ethnic Group Who Left After Specific Grades



Students of Native ancestry (51 per cent) were more likely than Caucasians (22 per cent) to leave at the grade 8 level or lower, while Caucasian school leavers (52 per cent) outnumbered Natives (24 per cent) in the high school grades.

The last grade completed was also influenced by the area in which the student resided (Table 4.1.4). Students most likely to leave in the early grades (grade 8 or less) were from remote/isolated or rural areas. Almost all of the leavers (93 per cent) from the remote/isolated areas left before high school as did two thirds of leavers from rural locations. School leavers in the high school grades (9 to 11) were more likely to be from small and large urban centres. This pattern corresponds closely with relationship of age of termination and residence reported in the previous section.

TABLE 4.1.4

Grade at Termination By Location of Residence: The Percentage of Leavers in Each Location Who Left at Specific Grade Levels

Grade	Location			
	Remote/ Isolated (%)	Large Urban (%)	Small Urban (%)	Rural (%)
6 or less	23	2	3	16
7	26	6	4	13
8	24	9	11	19
9	20	33	29	21
10	6	29	28	21
11	2	20	25	10
12	0	1	1	0
	100%	100%	100%	100%

Example: Leavers who dropped out at grade 6 or less were more likely to be from remote/isolated locations (23 per cent) and rural locations (16 per cent) than students from large urban (2 per cent) and small urban centres (3 per cent).

Note: Compare percentages for each grade across the columns.

With respect to the time of termination, only 16 per cent of leavers were reported to have quit at the end of the year. Eighty-three per cent left during the school year. This may be biased, however, in that the school year leaver is easier to identify; therefore, fewer end-of-the-year leavers would be reported.

The school year of termination was also recorded. Thirty-six per cent of the leavers had left in 1980-81, 28 per cent in 1981-82, and 31 per cent in 1982-83.

The schools reported the reasons they understood for the students' leaving school (Table 4.1.5). The most common response (22 per cent) was that the child was not interested in school. This is followed by "went to work" (16 per cent) and "just quit" (11 per cent).

TABLE 4.1.5

Reasons For Leaving School:
The Percentage of Students' Records Which Indicated a Specific Reason For Leaving

Reason	Percent (n=2,052)
No interest in school	22
Went to work	16
Just quit	11
Don't know	9
Would have failed/non-achiever	7
Personal and family problems	9
Other	12
Kicked out	3
Pregnancy	4
Family moving	2
Peer pressure	5
	100%

Example: 22 per cent of the students left because they had no interest in school.

The reasons for leaving which were indicated in the school records varied according to several characteristics of the students. Males were more likely than females to have left for the following reasons: "work"; "would have failed"; "kicked out", or "no interest". The reasons more likely to be reported for females were personal/family problems or pregnancy.

The reasons for leaving also differed somewhat according to the ethnic background of the student. Caucasian students were more likely than Natives to report "went to work", "helped at home", "just quit", or "peer pressure". In contrast, Native students tended to report "would have failed"; "don't know"; or "no interest".

When location of residence was considered, it was evident that different reasons were likely to be mentioned by students in different areas. The reason "no interest" was more often given by leavers in remote and rural locations. Residents of small urban areas were more likely than residents of other areas to report that they "went to work". The response "just quit" was more likely to be reported by students in large urban areas than the other locations.

Students leaving in the lower grades (less than junior high) tended to mention that they had "no interest"; "would have failed"; "just quit"; "reached 16"; or "left to help at home". Junior high students reported more often than others that they "would have failed"; "just quit" or, "peer pressure". In contrast, high school students were more likely to mention "work" as the reason for leaving school.

For those students who were noted to be discipline problems in school, several reasons for leaving were likely to be mentioned. These included: "kicked out"; "no interest"; or "trouble with the law".

Reason for leaving also tended to be different according to the school year of termination. In 1980-1981, "work" was the most frequently mentioned reason (by 20 per cent of students). "No interest" was mentioned by a similar proportion (19 per cent). Personal/family problems ranked third (11 per cent). The picture changed somewhat in 1981-1982, with more students reporting "no interest" (22 per cent) or "work" (17 per cent). In 1982-83, "no interest" was most common (28 per cent), with "just quit" ranking second (17 per cent). "Work" was reported as a reason for leaving school by fewer students (13 per cent).

Table 4.1.6 compares the two reasons: "work" and "no interest". It is evident that "work" steadily declined as a reason for leaving school during the three year period 1980 - 1983, while "no interest" has increased in importance. This pattern corresponds closely to the economic decline in the Province of Alberta during the three year period resulting in fewer jobs in 1983.

TABLE 4.1.6

Reasons For Leaving According to Year of Termination: The Percentage of Students Who Left Because of Work or No Interest in Each of the School Years

School Year	Reason for Leaving Work (%)	No Interest (%)
1982-83	13	25
1981-82	17	22
1980-81	20	19

Example: In 1982-83, 13 per cent of the students left to go to work, while 25 per cent left because of lack of interest.

4.1.4 School history and performance

The majority of school leavers (88 per cent) were enrolled in academic programs. A small proportion (12 per cent) was enrolled in vocational programs. School leavers who were enrolled in vocational programs were more likely to be male, Caucasian, and living in large urban centres.

Attendance for the early leavers was reported in two ways on the early school leaver request forms. Four hundred and twenty were reported on a scale of good, fair and poor. Twenty-three per cent were good, 17 per cent were fair and 60 per cent had poor attendance. The other manner of reporting was on a percentage attendance basis. Fifteen per cent attended less than 50 per cent of the time, 28 per cent attended between 50 per cent and 75 per cent of the time, 18 per cent attended between 75 per cent and 85 per cent of the time, 38 per cent attended between 85 per cent and 100 per cent of the time. In general the school attendance of leavers was not very good.

Approximately three-quarters of the leavers (76 per cent) were identified as being a disciplinary problem of one form or another. Males were more likely than females to be reported as discipline problems. Problems were also more likely to be mentioned in the records of school leavers from large or small urban centres as compared to more rural locations. There were no differences in the numbers of Caucasian and Native leavers who had discipline problems.

Of 688 retentions reported in the records, 58 per cent had been retained one year, 26 per cent for two years, 10 per cent for three years and the remaining 6 per cent four years or more. Students who had been retained one or two years tended to have the following characteristics: female, Caucasian, and from small or large urban centres. Leavers who had been retained for three or four years were more likely to be male, Native, and from rural or remote areas.

Out of 1,780 reporting cases, 74 per cent did not participate in extracurricular activities. Only 26 per cent of the leavers did participate.

Ninety-eight per cent of the leavers never received academic awards, 2 per cent did.

Standard achievement test/scores for reading and math were also obtained from the school record and these were compared with the student's grade level at the time of testing.

Table 4.1.7 presents reading test scores for 560 leavers. The first column reports the proportions of early school leavers whose grade level was higher than their test level. Three hundred and ninety-four (70 per cent) of the school leavers fall into this category. In contrast, 30 per cent (n=166) of the early school leavers had test scores higher than their grade level at the time of testing.

TABLE 4.1.7

Reading Scores:
The Percentage of Leavers Who Had Grade Scores Higher Than Test Scores, and Test Scores Higher Than Grade Scores

Difference in Grade Levels	(n=394) Grade Higher Than Test Score (%)	(n=166) Test Score Higher Than Grade (%)
Less than .5	18	33
.6 to 1.0	19	23
1.1 to 1.5	14	14
1.6 to 2.0	16	15
2.1 to 2.5	9	5
2.6 to 3.0	7	4
3.1 to 3.5	7	1
3.6 to 4.0	2	2
4.1 to 4.5	3	1
4.6 to 5.0	1	1
Over 5.0	4	2
	100%	100%

Example: 18 per cent of the leavers with a grade score higher than their test score had a difference of less than one-half a year. 33 per cent of the leavers with a test score higher than their grade score had a difference of less than one-half a year.

For those whose grade level was higher than their test level, differences of less than a year and a half were reported for approximately one-half of the students. However, about one-quarter of the early school leavers had test scores which were at least two and a half years lower than their grade level.

For the 30 per cent who scored higher than their grade level, the majority (85 per cent) scored within two grades of their actual grade level.

Table 4.1.8 presents math test scores for 514 leavers. Approximately 63 per cent (n=324) had a test score which was lower than their actual grade level. Thirty-seven per cent (n=190) had a test score which was higher than their grade level.

TABLE 4.1.8

Math Scores:
The Percentage of Leavers Who Had Grade Scores Higher Than Test Scores and Test Scores Higher Than Grade Scores

Difference in Grade Levels	n=324 Grades Higher Than Test Score (%)	n=190 Test Score Higher Than Grade (%)
Less than .5	19	30
.6 to 1.0	16	25
1.1 to 1.5	17	21
1.6 to 2.0	16	11
2.1 to 2.5	11	7
2.6 to 3.0	7	4
3.1 to 3.5	3	1
3.6 to 4.0	4	0
4.1 to 4.5	2	1
4.6 to 5.0	1	0
Over 5.0	5	1
	100%	100%

Where the grade level was higher than the test score, about one half (52 per cent) of the leavers had a difference of one and one-half grades or less, For those with higher test scores than grades, about three-quarters (77 per cent) reported test scores within one and a half years of their grade level.

Table 4.1.9 presents the composite scores for 421 school leavers. Two hundred and eighty-eight of the leavers (68 per cent) had grade scores which were higher than their composite test scores. The remaining students (32 per cent) had test scores which were higher than their grade levels.

TABLE 4.1.9

Composite Scores:
The Percentage of Leavers Who Had Grade Scores Higher Than Test Scores, and Test Scores Higher Than Grade Scores

Differences Between Grade and Test Levels	(n=388) Grade Higher Than Test Score (%)	(n=133) Test Score Higher Than Grade (%)
Less than .5	19	40
.6 to 1.0	22	26
1.1 to 1.5	16	15
1.6 to 2.0	15	5
2.1 to 2.5	11	5
2.6 to 3.0	5	5
3.1 to 3.5	4	2
3.6 to 4.0	1	0
4.1 to 4.5	2	1
4.6 to 5.0	2	0
Over 5.0	3	2
	100%	100%

Where grade level was higher than the composite test score, 43 per cent had a difference of one and a half grades or more. For those with higher composite test scores, about four-fifths (81 per cent) reported test scores within one and a half years of their grade level.

It is interesting to note that the percentage of students who score at grade level greater than test score is fairly comparable at 70 per cent for reading, 63 per cent for math, and 68 per cent for the composite score.

Intelligence test scores were provided for 381 cases. It should be noted that this is a composite of all types of tests administered at various ages and grade levels. Therefore, these scores provide only a rough indication of intelligence levels of leavers. The frequencies for the scores are presented in Table 4.1.10.

TABLE 4.1.10

Intelligence Scores:
The Percentage of Leavers Having Intelligence Scores in Each Range

I.Q.	(n=381) %
120+	5
110-119	11
100-109	21
90- 99	28
80- 89	22
70- 79	10
- 70	3
	100%

Example: 5 per cent of the school leavers had intelligence scores above 120.

In most types of intelligence tests, 50 per cent of a normal population has test scores of less than 100. In the sample of school leavers, almost two-thirds (63 per cent) have test scores lower than 100.

Few I.Q. scores were available for students in rural or remote areas, so no valid comparisons by location of residence could be made. On the tests used to measure I.Q., there were comparable proportions of Natives and Caucasians in the average range between 90 and 109 (48 per cent and 50.8 per cent, respectively).

Table 4.1.11 presents the actual grades the leavers obtained in three specified subjects in their last year of school.

TABLE 4.1.11

Grades in Last Year of School:
The Percentage of Leavers Who Obtained Specific Grades in
Language, Reading and Math

	Subject		
Grade	Language (%)	Reading (%)	Math (%)
0 - 10	1	2	1
11 - 20	2	3	5
21 - 30	7	11	10
31 - 40	19	19	23
41 - 50	24	17	20
51 - 60	24	19	18
61 - 70	17	18	14
71 - 80	5	11	8
81 - 90	0	1	2
91 - 100	0	-	-
	100%	100%	100%

24 per cent of the leavers received language grades between 41 per cent and 50 per cent; 17 per cent received marks for reading, and 20 per cent for math.

In language, 53 per cent of the students had a grade of 50 per cent or less. In reading, the proportion was 52 per cent with grades of 50 per cent or less, and 59 per cent for math. This shows that a large number of the leavers were at a failing level in their last full year of school.

The location of residence of the students did not appear to be a relevant factor influencing the students' grades in these three subjects. However, differences in grade scores were evident according to the ethnic background of the student. For math and reading, there were no differences in the proportion of Natives and Caucasian students who scored between 50 and 70. Caucasian students were more likely to score over 70. For grades below 50, Native students were more likely to have lower scores (under 40) while Caucasians were more likely to score between 41 and 50. Ethnicity did not appear to be related to language grades in any systematic manner.

4.1.5 Summary

Data obtained from 2,671 early school leaver request forms have been summarized in this section. The main findings derived from these data include the following early school leaver characteristics:

- school leavers were fairly evenly divided between males and females;
- one-third of the leavers were of Native ancestry while two-thirds were Caucasian or another race;
- most leavers (77 per cent) left school between the ages of 16 and 19 years, and between grades 9 and 11 (70 per cent);
- students who left school before the age of 16 were more likely to be from remote and isolated areas;
- Native students and those from remote/isolated areas were more likely to leave school at lower grade levels;
- common reasons reported for leaving school were lack of interest, just quitting, and going to work; reasons varied according to the sex and ethnic background of students, as well as their location of residence;

- attendance at school was poor;
- about three-quarters of the leavers were identified as disciplinary problems;
- Native students and males were more likely than Caucasian students and females to have failed three or four grades;
- most leavers did not participate in extracurricular activities;
- most leavers were in the average or below average intelligence range;
- many leavers were at a failing level in their courses in their last year of school.

In the following section, further information about early school leaver characteristics, obtained from interviews with leavers, is presented.

4.2 Early school leaver interviews

4.2.1 Introduction

The previous section has summarized descriptive information about a large sample of northern Alberta school leavers (n=2671). In order to develop a more complete picture of the early school leaver, in-depth interviews were conducted with a smaller sample of leavers (n=126). The interviews focused on the following descriptive characteristics:

i) familial and social background;
ii) schooling history; and
iii) personal views about the school environment.

Information was also obtained about the experience of early school leaving, including reasons for leaving, consultation with others, and a retrospective view of the decision to leave school.

4.2.2 Contacting the early leaver

School leavers from 15 different schools were interviewed during the course of the fieldwork (see Appendix C for distribution of the sample by school and school district). The interviews were scheduled with ex-students who had dropped out of high school or junior high school in the last few years. As much as possible, interviews were arranged in advance by individual schools and by the school district office.

Difficulties were encountered in contacting potential interviewees. Many of the dropouts had left the communities, could not be reached, were generally not available, or in many cases were simply not interested in being interviewed. To facilitate desirable interview times for the interviewees, evening as well as day appointments were arranged. Many of the people who agreed to come and for whom appointments were made failed to show up.

The people who did show up tended to be the more recent dropouts who, in many cases, were unemployed and still living in or around the community.

Note: Tables may not total exactly 100 per cent due to rounding of percentage figures.

In addition, interviews were held with students who had returned to school after dropping out. Interviews were also held at community vocational centres and Alberta Vocational Colleges with similar ex-students who had returned to an educational institution.

These factors should be taken into consideration when interpreting the data presented in this section.

4.2.3 The sample characteristics

The objective of the interview survey was to provide additional insights into the characteristics of the early school leaver. As such, the sample was not intended to be representative of the total universe of early school leavers in northern Alberta. However, there are several similarities between the characteristics of the school leaver interview sample and the larger sample discussed in the previous chapter. These similarities indicate that many of the findings from the interview sample may indeed be representative of the larger population of early school leavers.

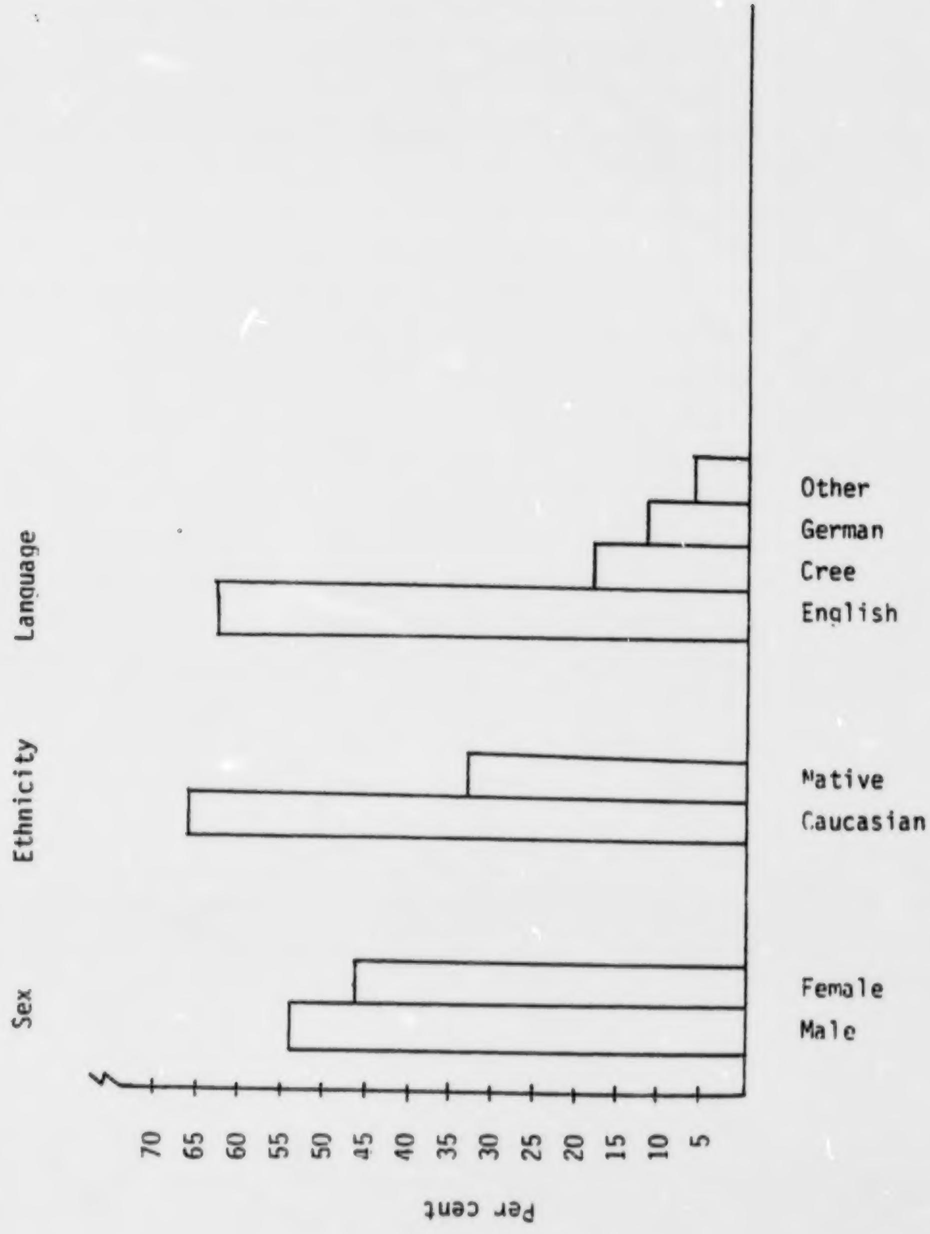
The proportions of males and females were comparable for both samples (i.e. males 54 per cent and females 46 per cent). About one-third of each sample was of Native ancestry, with two-thirds being Caucasian from a variety of ethnic backgrounds (see Figure 4.2.1).

The leavers in the interview sample had left school at many different grade levels (from grade 5 to grade 12). The proportion of those interviewed who had left prior to high school (grade 9 or less) was quite comparable to the proportion in the larger sample (i.e. 58 per cent). Correspondingly, the proportion which had left during high school was 41 per cent for both the interview and the larger sample.

The interview sample thus appeared to be similar to the larger school leaver population with respect to sex distribution, ethnicity and grade level completed. However, because of the difficulties in contacting early school leavers which were reported above, the interview sample tended to be biased toward more recent dropouts who tended to be unemployed, or who decided to return to schooling after a period of time.

Figure 4.2.1

Characteristics of Early School Leavers:
Sex, Ethnicity and Language



The sex distribution and age distribution of early school leavers at the time of the interview and the length of time they had been out of school is summarized in Appendix C.

4.2.4 Familial and social background of early school leavers

The early school leavers were asked several questions about their family and social backgrounds.

With regard to their first language, 63 per cent spoke English at home; 18 per cent spoke Cree; 12 per cent spoke German; 2 per cent spoke French; a small portion (4 per cent) identified other languages (see Figure 4.2.1). The high proportion of people speaking German as a first language occurs at La Crete, which is the central location of a number of Mennonite settlers. The language first spoken corresponds very closely with the language currently spoken at home.

Two-thirds of the sample were living in a two-parent household at the time they left school; 10 per cent were living with mother alone and 10 per cent with guardians. The remainder were living with their father, grandparents, foster parents or were on their own. Even though 65 per cent were living with two parents, it does not necessarily imply that they were the children's natural parents.

Table 4.2.1 presents the education level attained by both parents of the school leavers. About three-quarters of the fathers and two-thirds of the mothers had less than a high school education.

Table 4.2.2 presents the occupation distributions for the parents of the leavers interviewed.

TABLE 4.2.1

Parents' Education: Percentage of Fathers and Mothers Who Attained Specific Levels of Schooling

Grade Level	Father (%)	Mother (%)
No schooling	29	26
Elementary	21	18
Junior High	27	21
High School	14	29
More than High School	9	5
	100%	100%

Example: 29 per cent of the fathers had no formal schooling
26 per cent of the mothers had no formal schooling

TABLE 4.2.2

Parents' Occupation: Percentage of Parents in Each Occupational Category

Occupation	Father (%)	Mother (%)
Farming	14	2
Clerical	-	6
Tech-Voc-Para Prof.	22	7
Prof-Small Business	13	7
Sales	1	-
Labour	16	1
Service	10	21
Trapper	5	-
Housewife	-	42
Other	19	14
	100%	100%

Example: 22 per cent of the fathers had a technical/vocational/paraprofessional occupation.
42 per cent of the mothers were housewives.

Seventy-two per cent of the leavers interviewed had at least one other member of their immediate family who had dropped out of school. Eighty-seven per cent also indicated that some of their friends had left. Only 12 per cent indicated that they did not have any friends who had left school. Out of the 87 per cent, 33 per cent indicated that most of their friends had left, 21 per cent said about half of their friends had left and 46 per cent said only a few of their friends had dropped out early.

Thirty-one per cent reported problems with the law, other than minor traffic violations.

4.2.5 Schooling history and performance

4.2.5.1 Boarding and busing

Thirty per cent of the early leavers interviewed had attended school in one centre only. Forty-one per cent had attended school in two centres, 20 per cent in three and 25 per cent in four or more. Since 70 per cent of the students had attended schools in more than one centre, it is evident that school leavers had a fairly mobile history.

The majority of the interviewees (84 per cent) had lived at home throughout their school history. Three had never lived with their parents when going to school and 18 (14 per cent) had lived both at home and away from home when going to school.

Fourteen students who were interviewed boarded away from home while attending school. Three of these were less than 25 miles from home, four were between 50 and 65 miles, three were between 100 and 150 miles and the remaining four were in excess of 300 miles. When asked if they liked boarding out, nine said yes and five said no. Those who said yes gave the following reasons:

- "wanted opportunity to complete high school"
- "got used to it"
- "liked the teacher there"
- "good food"

- "personal problems with family"
- "felt independent".

Those who said "no" gave the following reasons:

- "problems getting along with children"
- "too strict, mean"
- "dirty"
- "away from boyfriend".

Ninety (71 percent) of the leavers had taken the bus at one time or another in their school years. The remainder (29 per cent) had always been able to walk to school. The highest proportion (38 per cent) had a maximum one-way bus ride of between 30 and 45 minutes. Thirty-one per cent rode less than 30 minutes one-way, 18 per cent rode between 46 and 50 minutes and 11 per cent had a one-way ride in excess of one hour.

4.2.5.2 Performance

Sixty-one per cent of the students felt their performance in their subjects was average while they were in school. Twenty per cent felt they were doing poorly and 19 per cent felt they were doing well.

Table 4.2.3 reports the subjects which the leavers indicated were their best and worst when they were in school. Math and English ranked as the best subjects for many students, but they were also the worst subjects for other students. Thirty-four per cent indicated math as their best in terms of grades. This is followed by English (18 per cent) and science (11 per cent). Twenty-eight per cent indicated math as their worst subject. This is followed by English (26 per cent), social studies (18 per cent) and science (17 per cent).

When asked how well they had done in their best subject, leavers indicated the following grades:

- 80 or better reported by 50 per cent of leavers;
- 70-79 reported by 30 per cent of leavers;
- 60-69 reported by 15 per cent of leavers;
- 59 or less reported by 5 per cent of leavers.

With regard to the grades they were getting in their worst subjects, the following marks were indicated:

- 70 or better reported by 2 per cent of leavers;
- 60-69 reported by 8 per cent of leavers;
- 50-59 reported by 18 per cent of leavers;
- 21-49 reported by 55 per cent of leavers;
- 0-20 reported by 18 per cent of leavers.

TABLE 4.2.3

The Best and Worst Subjects of the Leavers: The Percentage of Leavers Mentioning Specific Subjects

Subject	Best Grades n=126 (%)	Worst Grades n=126 (%)
Math	34	28
Science	12	17
Social	8	18
English	18	26
Vocational - shop	6	2
Business	5	-
Phys. Ed.	8	2
Academic options	2	3
Non-academic options	7	5
	100%	100%

Example: 34 per cent of the leavers mentioned math as their best subject. 28 per cent of the leavers mentioned math as their worst subject.

Forty-seven per cent of the leavers interviewed thought that, if asked, their teachers would indicate that they had worked hard in school. Fifty-three per cent thought their teachers would say they had not worked hard. Seventy-three per cent felt their teacher would say they were co-operative. Fifty-nine per cent felt that most of their teachers would indicate they did well in their courses. Forty-one per cent said their teachers would indicate they did not do well.

Thirty per cent felt that their principal would indicate they were a discipline problem, 70 per cent did not feel this.

Forty-three per cent indicated that they missed school a lot (more than two days per month), 34 per cent said they missed a bit (one or two days per month) and 23 per cent said they seldom missed.

4.2.5.3 Social interaction

The interviewees were asked how well they got along with their teachers, parents and other students at the time they were in school. They had three response choices: good, fair and poor. Forty-four per cent indicated they got along well with their teachers, 53 per cent fair and 3 per cent poorly. Sixty-four per cent got along well with their parents, 25 per cent fair and 11 per cent poorly. Sixty per cent got along well with other students, 34 per cent fair and 6 per cent poorly.

When asked how many friends they had at school, 63 per cent indicated they had many, while 27 per cent said "some". Only 7 per cent said "a few" and 2 per cent said they had no friends at school.

The leavers were fairly evenly split with regard to their involvement in extracurricular activities. Fifty-two per cent of the leavers indicated they were involved in extracurricular activities while they were in school. Forty-eight per cent were not. Table 4.2.4 specifies the activities in which the participants were involved. Students could specify all their extracurricular activities. Ninety-five per cent of the students mentioned sports, 14 per cent mentioned clubs, 11 per cent mentioned music and 4 per cent mentioned students' union or theatre.

TABLE 4.2.4

Extracurricular Activities:
The Percentage of Leavers Who Mentioned Participation in Specific Extracurricular Activities

Activity	Percentage
Sports	95
Clubs	14
Music	11
Students Union	4
Theatre	4

Example: 95 per cent of all leavers mentioned sports as one of their extracurricular activities.
Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 per cent since the leavers could mention more than one activity.

Sixty students were not involved in extracurricular activities. Forty per-cent of these indicated they were not involved simply because they were not interested. Twenty per cent said they could not participate because they lived too far; 12 per cent said they really did not know why they were not involved. Another 8 per cent said they were not involved because nothing was available and 7 per cent said they had to work after school.

4.2.6. Feelings about school

The leavers were asked to indicate their views about various aspects of their school experiences. Table 4.2.5 presents frequency distributions for the subjects which the early leavers most liked and disliked. The two most popular subjects among the early leavers interviewed are math, mentioned by 36 per cent of the leavers and physical education (30 per cent). The most disliked subject is English, mentioned by 33 per cent of the leavers, followed by science (23 per cent). Seventeen per cent of the leavers indicated there were no courses they disliked.

TABLE 4.2.5

Subjects Liked and Disliked:
The Proportion of Leavers Liking and Disliking
Specific Subjects

Subject	Liked n=126 (%)	Disliked n=126 (%)
Math	36	17
Science	22	23
Social	23	21
English	21	33
Vocational shop	20	1
Business	8	5
Phys. Ed.	30	2
Academic options	5	6
Non-academic options	13	2

Example: 36 per cent of the leavers mentioned that math was a favorite subjects.
33 per cent of leavers mentioned that English was a subject they disliked.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could mention more than one subject.

Early leavers indicated the main reasons why they liked their favourite subjects (see Table 4.2.6.). The most frequently mentioned responses were that they did well in them (mentioned by 56 per cent) and that the subjects were interesting (54 per cent). The main reason they disliked their least favourite subject was that it was too hard and they received poor grades in it (mentioned by 71 per cent) (see Table 4.2.7). It is interesting to note that teachers are not an important reason for liking (11 per cent) or disliking (15 per cent) a course.

TABLE 4.2.6

Reasons for Liking Courses: Percentage of Leavers Mentioning Specific Reasons

Reason	Percent
Did well in course	56
Education - useful	19
Interesting - liked it	54
Worked with hands	17
Like exercise and sports	20
Liked the teacher	11

Example: 56 per cent of the leavers mentioned that they liked courses because they did well in them.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could provide more than one reason.

TABLE 4.2.7

Reasons for Disliking Courses: Percentage of Leavers Mentioning Specific Reasons

Reason	Percent
Too hard - poor grades	71
Not relevant	12
Boring	21
Disliked teacher	15
Too much homework	6
Friends did not like it	4

Example: 71 per cent of the leavers mentioned that they disliked courses because they were too hard.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could provide more than one reason.

Table 4.2.8 and 4.2.9 present other features which the leaver liked and disliked about school. The presence of friends was mentioned as a positive feature by many leavers (60 per cent). On the other hand 11 per cent reported that they disliked peer pressure at school. This was meant in the sense of being pressured by friends to leave school, be truant or generally behave in a manner not exemplary of a good student. Two other features liked about school, both of which are internal to the schools, are sports (44 per cent) and extracurricular activities (13 per cent). Teachers were mentioned as liked by 10 per cent of the interviewees. They are also identified as the greatest dislike by 37 per cent of the sample. Other, but much less significant dislikes are homework (15 per cent) and discipline (14 per cent).

TABLE 4.2.8

Features Liked About School:
Percentage of Leavers Mentioning Specific Features

Features	Percent
Learning	13
Friends	60
Sports	44
Extracurricular activities	13
Field trips	1
Teachers	10

Example: 60 per cent of the leavers mentioned that they liked the presence of friends in school.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could mentioned more than one feature.

TABLE 4.2.9

Features Disliked About School:
Percentage of Leavers Mentioning Specific Features

Features	Percent
Teachers	37
Homework	15
Discipline	14
Peer pressure	11
School work	7
Busing	6
School not relevant	6
Lack options	5
Being away from home	3
Other	20

Example: 37 per cent of the leavers mentioned that they disliked the teachers.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could mention more than one feature.

Seventy-six per cent of the students felt that discipline in their school was fair. Twenty-four per cent felt it was not. Twelve students (41 per cent) who felt it was unfair indicated that they considered the punishment to be unfair.

4.2.7. School leaving experience

Several questions were asked which focused on the considerations and experiences associated with leaving school.

Most of the people interviewed first thought of leaving school when in grade 9 (30 per cent) or grade 10 (28 per cent) (see Table 4.2.10.) This corresponds directly with the last grade completed by the school leavers which is grade 9 (30 per cent) and grade 10 (29 per cent). This is consistent with what was expressed by many of these people that there was not a lot of early consideration about leaving school. Most often, when they thought about it, they completed their grade and then left.

TABLE 4.2.10

The Percentage of Leavers Who Considered Leaving at Each Grade Level, and the Last Grade They Completed

Grade Level	First Thought of Leaving n=126 (%)	Last Grade Completed n=126 (%)
5	-	2
6	2	4
7	11	8
8	12	14
9	30	30
10	29	29
11	11	8
12	5	4
	100%	100%

Example: 30 per cent of the leavers first considered leaving in Grade 9, and 30 per cent left school after finishing Grade 9.

Two-thirds of the sample (66 per cent) were 15 or 16 years of age when they first considered leaving (see Table 4.2.11). The age and grade levels at the time of leaving correspond fairly closely at 15 and 16 years with grades 9 and 10. Most students begin grade 1 at six years of age. If they are not retained they would be 15 years of age at the completion of grade 9 and 16 years at grade 10 completion.

TABLE 4.2.11

The Percentage of Leavers Who Considered Leaving School at Each Age Level

Age	n=126 Percent
Less than 13	1
13	2
14	17
15	31
16	35
17	11
18	2
More than 18	1
	100%

Table 4.2.12 presents the reasons that people gave for leaving school. Each respondent could give up to four reasons. It is interesting to note that 40 out of 126 or 32 per cent of those interviewed mentioned problems with teachers and administrators as a reason for leaving school.

TABLE 4.2.12

Reasons for Leaving School: The Percentage of Leavers Who Gave Specific Reasons For Leaving School

Reason	n=126 Percent
Poor grades	20
Want vocational education	2
Family problems	22
Trouble out of school	3
Peer pressure	14
Wanted to earn money	18
Problems with teachers and administrators	32
Emotional problems	6
Not interested in school	31
Have to board out	5
Need to help at home	5
Had a job	4
School too far	3
Other	3

Example: 32 per cent of the leavers mentioned problems with teachers and administrators as a reason for leaving school.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could mention more than one reason.

"Not interested in school" was mentioned by a similar proportion of leavers (31 per cent). "Family problems" (22 per cent), "poor grades" (20 per cent), "wanted to earn money" (18 per cent), and "peer pressure" (14 per cent) were the next highest frequency responses.

A large majority of leavers (80 per cent) indicated that leaving school was their own idea. Of the remaining 20 per cent who mentioned that it was someone else's idea, approximately one-half reported it was their parents' idea, 17 per cent the teachers', 13 per cent the administrators', 4 per cent friends', 4 per cent the law. This can be interpreted to read that 10 per cent of our sample left school at the suggestion of their parents and 6 per cent left at the suggestion of teachers and administrators.

Table 4.2.13 demonstrates that at least three quarters of the students did not feel comfortable about approaching school staff to discuss their leaving school. Yet 66 per cent of those who left had talked to their parents about leaving, while 43 per cent had talked to their friends. Of those who had talked to school staff, approximately 57 per cent felt that the staff understood, while 66 per cent indicated that parents understood and 85 per cent that friends understood. School staff (particularly counsellors and teachers) tended to encourage students to stay in school more frequently than did parents or friends.

TABLE 4.2.13

Percentage of Leavers Who Consulted With Others Prior to Leaving, Felt They Were Understood, or Were Encouraged To Stay

Position	Consult (%)		Understood (% of Yes)		Encourage to Stay (% of Yes)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Counsellor	14	85	56	44	67	33
Teachers	13	87	56	44	75	25
Administrators	25	75	59	41	53	47
Parents	66	40	66	34	51	49
Friends	43	57	85	15	48	52

Example: 13 per cent of leavers had consulted with teachers before leaving (Column 1):
- of these leavers who had consulted with teachers, 56 per cent felt that the teachers understood (Column 3);
- 75 per cent of the leavers who had consulted with teachers were encouraged to stay in school (Column 5).

Table 4.2.14 indicates those whom the early leavers considered to be the most responsible for their dropping out. It is interesting to note that close to half (48 per cent) mentioned leavers themselves. Seventeen per cent identified friends and 22 per cent mentioned teachers and administrators.

When reporting whom they consider the second most responsible, leavers identified parents (21 per cent) and teachers and administrators (38 per cent) most frequently.

TABLE 4.2.14

Responsibility for Leaving:
Percentage of Leavers Who Considered Particular People
to be Responsible For Their Leaving

Person	Most Responsible (%)	Second Most Responsible (%)
Leavers themselves	48	11
Friends	17	18
Parents	8	21
Teachers and Administrators	22	38
Community	2	6
Employers	3	6
	100%	100%

Example: 48 per cent of the leavers felt that the leavers themselves were most responsible for their leaving.

38 per cent felt that teachers and administrators were the second most responsible for their leaving.

Fifty-seven per cent of the sample (72 leavers) indicated that something could have been done to keep them in school. Forty-three per cent indicated nothing could have been done to persuade them to stay.

Table 4.2.15 presents the leavers' responses concerning what could have been done to persuade them to stay in school. The highest frequency response (31 per cent) is that better counselling, both in terms of encouragement to stay in school and a better awareness of career options, would have been an inducement. Better teachers rated highly (28 per cent of responses) as did better courses and a better choice of courses (24 per cent). More encouragement at home (21 per cent) was the only factor external to the school system that was mentioned frequently as an inducement.

TABLE 4.2.15

What Could Have Kept Students In:
The Percentage of Leavers Who Considered Each Factor
to be Important in Persuading Them to Stay in School

Factor	Percent of Yes (n=72)
Better and more courses	24
Better teachers	28
School closer	4
Better counselling	31
Encouragement at home	21
More extracurricular activities	11
Other	17

Example: Of those students who indicated that they may have been persuaded to stay in school, 31 per cent mentioned that better counselling would have been effective.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could respond to every factor.

Sixty-one per cent of dropouts stated that when they left they intended to go back to school someday. Thirty-seven per cent indicated that they did not. Fifty-four per cent of students knew what they were going to do when they left; 46 per cent said they did not know. In other words close to one-half of the dropouts had no plans beyond leaving school. Of the 54 per cent who said they knew what they were going to do, 45 per cent indicated they were either going to work or looking for work. Another 7 per cent of these said they would work at home and 6 per cent said they would simply stay at home.

Fifty-one per cent of those interviewed indicated that at the time they left school they did not consider completing high school important to getting a job. Thirty-one per cent considered it important and 18 per cent considered it somewhat important. Fifty-seven per cent of students indicated they do not feel the same way at present and 43 per cent said they do. Now 88 per cent rate high school completion as being very important to getting a job, 11 per cent say it is somewhat important and only 1 per cent say it is not important.

Sixty per cent of those surveyed felt that dropping out was the best thing they could have done at the time. The other 40 per cent did not think so. Seventeen per cent indicated that it was their best choice at the time because they were going to get a job, 9 per cent were going to work at home, 11 per cent had poor grades and were under a lot of pressure, 8 per cent felt school was irrelevant, 10 per cent had personal problems which interfered with school and 8 per cent had problems with teachers. Of those who said it was not the best thing they could have done, a portion indicated that they now realize education is important, while 6 per cent indicated there were no jobs available anyway.

When asked if they really wanted to leave when they did, 58 per cent said yes and 42 per cent said no. Only 19 per cent indicated that they would leave if they were back in school now. Eighty-one per cent would choose to stay and complete school. Sixty-three per cent of those interviewed said they returned to school because they realize education is important.

4.2.8 After leaving school

The leavers were asked several questions about their activities after leaving school. These included employment history, job satisfaction, education since dropping out, and plans for the future.

Thirty-nine per cent of the dropouts (47) went to a job when they left school. Since leaving, two-thirds had found full-time jobs, and 13 per cent had had part-time jobs. Sixty-four per cent had worked in the local area; 21 per cent had worked away from home and 15 per cent had worked both locally and away. Thirty-nine per cent had a part-time job while they were in school. Note that the number of interviewees (47) who had part-time jobs while in school corresponds directly with the number (47) who had jobs when they left school.

Table 4.2.16 shows the length of time the leavers had been employed since leaving school. In all, 62 per cent had worked less than one year since leaving school. This shows a fairly low employment rate among the dropouts that were interviewed. It should be cautioned that there is likely a bias in this direction since the unemployed dropout tended to be the one who was the most available to be interviewed.

TABLE 4.2.16

Time Employed Since Leaving

Months	Percent of Leavers
0	18
Less than 6 months	23
6 months to 1 year	21
1 year to 3 years	21
More than 3 years	16
	100%

Example: 18 per cent of the leavers had not worked at all since leaving school.

Seventy-nine per cent of those interviewed indicated that they liked their last job. A smaller proportion (59 per cent) indicated they liked it better than school, while 35 per cent indicated school was preferable. Reasons given by those who liked their last job better than school were that they made money, they liked the independence, and it was more interesting. Forty-three per cent who indicated that they preferred school to their last job stated that they missed learning. Twenty-two per cent said it was because they had a dead-end job. Fourteen per cent said they missed their friends and 14 per cent said it was harder than going to school.

Fifty per cent of those interviewed had either taken courses since they had dropped out, or were now back in school. Table 4.2.17 presents a breakdown of the institutions the leavers attended after leaving school. A very high number (41 per cent) ended up taking vocational training. Twenty per cent returned to a regular school system.

TABLE 4.2.17

Education Upgrading After Leaving:
The Percentage of Leavers Who had Attended Specific Educational Programs After Leaving School

Institution or Program	Percent n=63
Vocational	41
Correspondence	15
Apprenticeship	9
On-the-job training	3
Community Vocational Centre (upgrading)	14
School system	19
	100%

Example: 41 per cent of the leavers had attended vocational school since leaving school.

An overwhelming majority (92 per cent) indicated they intended to get more education in the next five years. Forty-four per cent of these indicated they would take vocational education, 24 per cent say they would return to school (some of these were already back in school), and 12 per cent had plans to go to university.

4.2.9 The school leavers' perspective

The school leavers were asked to outline some of their views about school leaving, and to comment on a number of different aspects of the school environment. Table 4.2.18 presents the importance ratings of different reasons that contribute to early school leaving. Over one-half of the respondents indicated the following factors to be very important: not interested in school (55 per cent), poor grades (48 per cent), unpleasant school atmosphere (55 per cent), poor home life (58 per cent), teaching approaches (59 per cent), no home encouragement (55 per cent) and social factors such as drugs, alcohol and pregnancy (58 per cent). The highest frequency "not important" ratings are: distance of the home from the school (69 per cent), peer pressure (37 per cent) and school facilities (43 per cent). In general most of the factors listed were considered to be important reasons for dropping out of school.

Table 4.2.19 summarizes the factors which leavers felt would help retain students in school. Students could provide up to three different responses. Twenty-seven per cent of those interviewed identified better course work and 19 per cent identified additional programs as key factors. This was interpreted by the research team to mean that more relevant courses, along with a better variety of program offerings which would include work experience, would assist in retaining students in school. Better career counselling (18 per cent) and better preventative counselling (21 per cent) are also identified as factors that would help retain students. Twenty-two per cent indicated that better teachers and student-teacher relations would be beneficial. Eighteen per cent felt that making schools more interesting through extra-curricular activities would help.

TABLE 4.2.18

Reasons for Early Leaving: The Percentage of Leavers who Considered Each Reason to be Very Important, Important or Not Important

Reasons	Very Important (%)	Important (%)	Not Important (%)
Distance, home-school	16	15	69
Need for income	37	39	24
Peer pressure	33	30	37
Not interested	55	28	17
Poor grades	48	33	20
Desire to work	43	33	24
Courses irrelevant	39	30	30
School atmosphere	55	23	22
Home life	58	20	22
School facilities	30	28	43
Teaching approaches	59	26	14
No home encouragement	55	26	20
Social factors (drugs, alcohol, pregnancy)	58	20	21

Example: 16 per cent of the leavers felt that distance from home to school was a very important reason for leaving school, 15 per cent felt it was important, and 69 per cent felt it was not important.

Note: The total percentage across each row is 100%

TABLE 4.2.19

Keeping Students in School: The Percentage of Leavers who Felt That Certain Factors Would Help to Keep Students in School

Factors	Percentage
Schools closer to home	5
Better career counselling	18
Better course work	27
Better counselling	21
More programs and work experience	19
Better teachers and relations	22
More parent/community involvement and encouragement	11
More interesting schools (extracurricular activities)	18
More student responsibility	10
Administrative and disciplinary changes	4
Facility changes	7

Example: 5 per cent of the leavers mentioned "schools closer to home" as a factor which would help to retain students.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could mention more than one reason.

Approximately one-half of the sample indicated that there were subjects they would have liked to take which were not offered at their school. Table 4.2.20 presents the list of these subjects and their associated frequencies. By far the most common subject area which the leavers would like to have taken when they were in school is vocational education.

TABLE 4.2.20

Desired Areas of Study:
The Percentage of Leavers who Desired Particular Areas of Study

Frequently Mentioned Areas of Study	Percentage
Vocational education	49
Business education	14
Clerical	8
Computer skills	15
Life skills	8
Natural sciences	3
Social sciences	9
Local history and culture	5
Physical education	7

Example: 49 per cent of the leavers mentioned that they would like to have taken vocational education.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could mention more than one subject.

Table 4.2.21 summarizes the factors which leavers identify as being characteristic of an effective teacher. Table 4.2.22 does the same for the characteristics of an ineffective teacher. Each leaver could provide up to three characteristics for each category. Forty-four per cent of the students identified a good teacher as one who is easy going and humorous. This is followed by 41 per cent who said the good teacher explains things clearly and 36 per cent who said the teacher understands children. Being interested in and helping students are equally important at 20 per cent. An ineffective teacher is poorly prepared (33 per cent), doesn't care (31 per cent), is bad tempered (31 per cent), is boring (27 per cent), and has poor class control (25 per cent).

TABLE 4.2.21

Characteristics of an Effective Teacher:
The Percentage of Leavers Who Mentioned Each Feature

Characteristic	Percentage
Understands children	36
Interested in children	20
Is fair	17
Helps children	20
Explains things clearly	41
Cares	17
Easy going and humorous	44
Presents a good class	6
Well prepared	8

Example: 36 per cent of leavers mentioned "understands children" as a characteristic of an effective teacher.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could mention more than one feature.

TABLE 4.2.22

Characteristics of an Ineffective Teacher:
The Percentage of Leavers Who Mentioned Each Feature

Characteristic	Percentage
Ignores poor students	16
Does not care	31
Poor communication	20
Poor class control	25
Poorly prepared	33
Boring	27
Bad tempered	31
Ridicules children	6
Poor role model	5

Example: 16 per cent of the leavers felt that the ineffective teacher ignores poor students.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since leavers could mention more than one feature.

4.2.10 Summary

The information obtained from interviews with 126 early school leavers has been presented in this section. Key findings reported in the discussion include the following leaver characteristics:

- one-third of the leavers did not live in a two-parent household;
- most had other family members including parents, and friends who had left before completing high school;
- almost one-third reported problems with the law;
- many (70 per cent) had a fairly mobile school history;
- seventy per cent had taken the bus at some time in their schooling;
- school attendance was poor for many leavers;
- the presence of friends was the most frequently mentioned positive feature of school; and teachers were the most frequently mentioned negative feature;
- most early leavers first thought about leaving in grade 9 or 10;
- the most common reasons for leaving school were problems with teachers and administrators (32 per cent) and lack of interest (31 per cent);
- few leavers had consulted with school staff before leaving;
- fifty per cent of leavers did not have alternative plans;
- fifty per cent said something could have been done to keep them in school, including better school counselling, better relationships with teachers, and more relevant courses;
- one half had continued their education since leaving, mostly in the area of vocational education.

In the next section, information obtained through interviews with students likely to remain in school is presented. These students are identified as school stayers.

4.3 School stayer interviews

4.3.1 Introduction

This section summarizes the findings from interviews with school stayers. Students identified by teachers and administrators as being likely to complete the requirements for the grade 12 diploma were defined as school stayers. Fifty-six stayers were interviewed in sixteen high schools and junior high schools in northern Alberta. The researchers requested that school administrators include representative stayer volunteers performing at the high, average and low achievement levels.

In order to facilitate comparison with the information on early school leavers reported in the previous section, this section is organized in a similar manner, focusing on familial and social background, school history and performance and personal views about school.

4.3.2 Sample characteristics

The six jurisdictions in which the stayers were interviewed are represented in Appendix C, which also reports the schools attended. Almost half (49 per cent) of those students interviewed were in the Lakeland and Northland School systems, while 7 per cent attended school in the Lac La Biche School Division. The difference in percentage of interviews was primarily a function of administration and stayer availability, although size of the jurisdiction was also a factor.

Seventy-one per cent of those interviewed were high school students; 29 per cent were enrolled in junior high. Six grade levels were represented: grade 7 (4 per cent); grade 8 (2 per cent); grade 9 (23 per cent); grade 10 (7 per cent); grade 11 (32 per cent) and grade 12 (32 per cent).

School stayers ranged in age from 11 to 20 years old, with the majority between 14 and 17 years of age (71 per cent). The sample was evenly divided (50 per cent) between males and females.

The sample consisted of 17 students of Native ancestry (30 per cent) and 49 Caucasians (70 per cent).

Note: Tables may not total exactly 100 per cent due to rounding of percentage figures.

The sample of school stayers was similar to that of the school leaver interview sample in terms of both sex and ethnic distribution.

4.3.3 Familial and social background

The languages spoken at home were English (64 per cent), Cree and Cree/English (18 per cent), French (7 per cent), German, Dutch and other (9 per cent). Most of the stayers lived with their parents (80 per cent), some with their mother only (11 per cent), a few lived with other relatives or guardians, and two were living independently.

About half of the stayers' fathers (47 per cent) and mothers (48 per cent) had attended high school. Forty per cent of the fathers and 38 per cent of the mothers had completed the requirements for high school diploma. Table 4.3.1 provides a summary of the education levels completed by the parents of the school stayer.

TABLE 4.3.1

Parents' Education:
Fathers and Mothers who Attained Specific Levels of Schooling

Grade Level	Father (%)	Mother (%)
Elementary	14	13
Junior High	16	27
High School	47	48
(H.S. Diploma)	(40)	(38)
None/Don't Know	23	12

Example: 14 per cent of the fathers and 13 per cent of the mothers had an educational level of less than junior high.

Many of the fathers were retired (21 per cent) while those who were employed were in the technical/para-professional (16 per cent), professional/small business (34 per cent) or construction (14 per cent) sectors of the economy. Mothers were housewives (39 per cent), service (16 per cent) and clerical

(12 per cent) workers. The occupation of stayers' parents appear in Table 4.3.2.

TABLE 4.3.2

Parents' Occupations:
Percentage of Parents in Each Occupation Category

Occupation	Father (%)	Mother (%)
Farming	5	2
Tech/para-professional	16	7
Prof/Small Business	34	9
Service	5	16
Clerical	-	12
Construction	14	4
Housewife	-	39
Retired	21	11
Other	4	-
	100%	100%

Example: 34 per cent of the fathers and 9 per cent of the mothers had occupations in the professional and small business category.

Forty-six per cent of the school stayers interviewed had at least one other member of their immediate family who had dropped out of school. Sixty-eight per cent of stayers indicated that some of their friends had left school. Thirty-two per cent said they had no friends who had left. Of those who had, 76 per cent indicated only a few had left, 13 per cent indicated about half their friends had left and 11 per cent said most of them had left.

4.3.4 Schooling history and performance

4.3.4.1 Boarding and busing

Fifty-two per cent of the sample had lived in only one centre for their entire school lives, while 48 per cent had lived in more than one centre, (21 per cent had lived in two centres, 16 per cent in three and 11 per cent in four or more). Sixty-three per cent of the students rode the bus at one time or another in their school life, and the average bus travel time was 27 minutes one way.

Two of the students boarded out. Both liked it, with one indicating he was living with friends and a brother and the other saying it meant getting away from family problems.

4.3.4.2 Performance

The school stayer feels rather positive about his school performance. When asked, 48 per cent responded that they were doing "well", 45 per cent "average", and 7 per cent "poor".

Almost one-third of the stayers reported math to be their best subject. However, math was reported as the worst subject for many students (23%) as were science, social studies and English. The subjects for which the student reported their best and worst grades are summarized in Table 4.3.3.

In the best subject, the distribution of marks was as follows:

- 90 or better reported by 32 per cent of students;
- 80-89 reported by 40 per cent of students;
- 70-79 reported by 13 per cent of students;
- less than 70 reported by 13 per cent of students.

The distribution of marks in the worst subjects were as follows:

- 70 or better reported by 32 per cent of students;
- 60-69 reported by 14 per cent of students;
- 50-59 reported by 24 per cent of students;
- 21-49 reported by 22 per cent of students;
- 20 or less reported by 8 per cent of students.

TABLE 4.3.3

The Best and Worst Subjects of the Stayers: The Percentage of Stayers Mentioning Specific Subjects

Subject	Best Grades (%)	Worst Grades (%)
Math	30	23
Science	11	18
Social studies	11	20
English	14	23
Business	13	4
Academic option	7	7
Non-academic option	7	2
Other	6	2
	100%	100%

Example: 30 per cent of the stayers mentioned math as their best subject, and 23 per cent mentioned math as their worst subject.

The students were asked how they felt the school staff perceived them. Eighty-nine per cent of students felt that their teacher would indicate they worked hard in school, 11 per cent felt they would not indicate that. Similarly 89 per cent felt that their teachers would indicate they are co-operative in school, while 9 per cent felt they would not. Eighty per cent felt that their teacher would indicate they do well in their courses, 14 per cent thought they would not and 5 per cent did not respond.

Ninety-three per cent of the students felt they would not be identified as a discipline problem, 5 per cent felt that they would. Sixty-one per cent said their teachers would indicate they attended school regularly; 34 per cent "missed a bit"; and 5 per cent "missed a lot" (more than two days per month).

4.3.4.3 Social interaction

In a series of questions, students were asked to rate how they got along with others. Seventy-three per cent indicated they got along well with teachers, 23 per cent said fair and 4 per cent said poorly. Eighty per cent got along well with parents, 14 per cent fair, and 5 per cent poorly. The relationship with other students was described as good by 77 per cent of the stayers, fair by 23 per cent, and there were no poor ratings.

When asked how many friends they have at school, 64 per cent said many, 23 per cent said some, 11 per cent said few and 2 per cent said no friends.

Eighty-six per cent of stayers felt they were treated fairly at school. Those who felt that they were mistreated indicated it was primarily the teachers who were responsible.

Of the 56 stayers interviewed, 36 (64 per cent) were involved in extracurricular activities and 20 (36 per cent) were not. Of those who were, most (86 per cent) were involved in sports. The others were involved primarily in music, clubs and students' union. Those who were not involved reported that the primary reason was that they were not interested or that they worked and therefore did not have time.

4.3.5 Feelings about school

The school stayers were asked their views about various aspects of their school experiences. When asked what courses they liked most, the stayers indicated math (61 per cent), science (31 per cent), and English (31 per cent). It is interesting to note that math (31 per cent) and science (22 per cent) were also reported as being disliked by many stayers as was social studies (25 per cent). Table 4.3.4 provides information concerning the preferences of stayers.

TABLE 4.3.4

Subjects Liked and Disliked: The Percentage of Stayers Liking and Disliking Specific Subjects

Subject	Liked (%)	Disliked (%)
Math	61	31
Science	31	22
Social studies	19	25
English	31	19
Vocational shop	13	0
Business	15	9
Phys. Ed.	22	3
Academic options	8	15
Non-academic options	6	3

Example: 61 per cent of the stayers mentioned that math was a favourite subject.
31 per cent of the stayers mentioned that they disliked math.

Note: The total percentage for each column is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one subject.

Students were also asked why they liked or disliked the courses identified. The most important factor reported for liking a course was that it was "interesting" (80 per cent). "Doing well/easy" was also mentioned by about one third (36 per cent) of the students. Only 7 per cent reported that the teacher was a factor in liking the course.

Thirty-nine per cent of the stayers indicated that they did not have any course dislikes. Those who provided reasons why they disliked certain courses indicated that they were "too hard" (70 per cent) or "not relevant" (12 per cent). Tables 4.3.5 and 4.3.6 summarize stayers' reasons for liking and disliking courses.

TABLE 4.3.5

Reasons for Liking Courses: Percentage of Stayers Mentioning Specific Reasons

Reason	Percent
Interesting	80
Did well/easy	36
Relevant	32
Exercise	14
Work with hands	12
Liked teacher	7

Example: 80 per cent of the stayers mentioned that they liked courses because they were interesting.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since stayers could provide more than one reason.

TABLE 4.3.6

Reason for Disliking Courses: Percentage of Stayers Mentioning Specific Reasons

Reason	Percent
Too hard	70
Not relevant	12
Not interesting	7
Disliked teacher	7
Peer pressure	2

Example: 70 per cent of the stayers mentioned that they disliked courses because they were too hard.

Students were also asked to indicate other features they liked and disliked about school. Students who remained in school and expected to graduate liked sports (34 per cent), extracurricular activities (31 per cent), their teachers (28 per cent) and friends (27 per cent). The primary dislike of the stayers was the school discipline, which was mentioned by more than half of the stayers. While teachers were liked, they were also disliked by 33 per cent of those responding. Tables 4.3.7 and 4.3.8 summarize stayers' specific likes and dislikes with respect to school.

TABLE 4.3.7

Features Liked About School: Percentage of Stayers Mentioning Specific Features

Features	Percent of Stayers
Learning	9
Friends	27
Sports	34
Extracurricular	31
Field experiences	9
Teachers	28
Other	2

Example: 27 per cent of the stayers mentioned that they liked the presence of friends in school.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since the students could mention more than one factor.

TABLE 4.3.8

Features Disliked About School: Percentage of Stayers Mentioning Specific Features

Features	Percent of Stayers
Discipline	53
Teachers	33
Facilities	26
Homework	13
Other	33

Example: 53 per cent of stayers mentioned that they disliked the discipline in school.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since the students could mention more than one factor.

Eighty-two per cent of those interviewed felt that the discipline was fair in their school. Eighteen per cent did not think it was. Those who thought it was not fair mentioned the use of the strap or that discipline is too lax.

4.3.6 School leaving consideration

This section deals with the consideration of leaving school. Seventy-seven per cent of the stayers had never considered leaving before grade 12 graduation, while 23 per cent had considered it seriously at some point. Most of these had last considered leaving in the previous year. The 13 students who had considered leaving gave a variety of reasons, including poor grades, no interest in school, not getting along with the teacher, emotional problems, and a job. When they had considered leaving, three (23 per cent) of 13 had talked to a counsellor, two (15%) had talked to a teacher and only one had talked to a principal. Seven students had talked to parents (54 per cent) while 46 per cent had talked to friends.

Five (38 per cent) decided to stay because they realized that that was what they wanted to do; three (23 per cent) realized they needed their schooling; two (15 per cent) developed an interest in school; and the remaining two said they stayed because of peer pressure and the lack of jobs. All of these students indicated that they were now there to stay and would not decide to leave later.

Ninety-five per cent of those interviewed expressed that high school completion is very important to getting a job. Four per cent felt it to be somewhat important and 2 per cent did not feel it to be important.

4.3.7 The future

This section deals with part-time work and the future plans of the school stayers who were interviewed.

Thirty per cent of the stayers had a part-time job while in school; 68 per cent did not. When asked if they expected to be working five years from now, 64 per cent said "yes" and 36 per cent said "no". Of those who responded "yes", 3 per cent said they wanted to be farming, 9 per cent mentioned clerical work, 38 per cent said technical/para-professional occupations, 44 per cent wanted professional occupations, 3 per cent said construction and 3 per cent said service type occupations. All of those who said that they did not expect to be working indicated that they would still be in school.

4.3.8 The school stayers' perspective

The school stayers were asked to outline some views about school leaving, and to comment on aspects of the school environment. Table 4.3.9 summarizes the students' ratings of the importance of various factors contributing to early school leaving.

TABLE 4.3.9

Importance of Reasons For Early Leaving:
The Percentage of Stayers who Considered Each Reason to be
Important, Somewhat Important or Not Important

Reason	Very Important (%)	Somewhat Important (%)	Not Important (%)
Distance, home-school	4	21	70
Need for income	45	32	21
Peer pressure	21	27	48
Not interested	43	29	27
Poor grades	36	36	27
Desire to work	25	34	39
Courses irrelevant	34	25	39
School atmosphere	38	39	21
Home life	59	29	11
School facilities	9	38	48
Teaching approaches	55	29	13
No home encouragement	57	23	14
Social factors (drugs-alcohol)	57	20	16

Example: 45 per cent of the students felt that the need for income was very important as a reason for leaving school; 32 per cent felt it to be somewhat important; and 21 per cent not important.

Note: The total percentage across each row is approximately 100 The totals may not add to 100 if not all students responded.

The highest frequency of very important ratings are home life, (59 per cent), no home encouragement (57 per cent), social factors (57 per cent) and teaching approaches (55 per cent). Factors which were rated as "not important" included distance of home from school (70 per cent), peer pressure (48 per cent) and school facilities (48 per cent).

Table 4.3.10 indicates those whom the stayer feels is most responsible and second most responsible for students' dropping out of school. Fifty-nine per cent believe the leaver is most responsible. This is followed by teachers (16 per cent) and parents (13 per cent). The second most responsible are friends (23 per cent), parents (20 per cent) and teachers (18 per cent).

TABLE 4.3.10

Responsibility For Early Leaving:
Percentage of Stayers Who Considered Particular People To Be Responsible For School Leaving

Person	Most Responsible (%)	Second Most Responsible (%)
Leavers themselves	59	11
Friends	5	23
Parents	13	20
Teachers and administrators	16	18
The community	5	13
Employers	-	2
No answer	2	13
	100%	100%

Example: 59 per cent of the students felt that the leavers themselves were most responsible for school leaving.
23 per cent felt that friends were the second most responsible.

Fifty-eight per cent of the school stayers reported that there were courses they would like to take, but were not available in their school. The most frequently mentioned areas of study were vocational education (24 per cent) and social science (26 per cent). Table 4.3.11 lists the preferred subject areas and the percentage of school stayers mentioning them.

TABLE 4.3.11

Desired Areas of Study:
The Percentage of Stayers Who Desired Particular Areas of Study

Frequently Mentioned Areas of Study	Percent
Vocational education	24
Business education	13
Clerical	0
Computer skills	17
Life skills	13
Natural sciences	7
Social sciences	26
Phys. Ed.	7
Music	10
Art, drama, other	20

Example: 24 per cent of the stayers who requested additional areas of study said that they would like to take vocational education.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one subject area.

Table 4.3.12 presents the changes that the students feel would make school more interesting and helpful to them. Twenty-nine per cent of the stayers indicated that more relevant courses would be of benefit to them. This is followed by more extracurricular activities (25 per cent) and better teachers (16 per cent).

TABLE 4.3.12

Changes That Would Make School More Interesting and Helpful: Percentage of Students Who Mentioned Each Factor

Factor	Percentage
More relevant courses	29
Better teachers	16
Smaller classes	7
More extracurricular activities	25
Better guidance consellinq	9
Better career counselling	13
Better home situation and encouragement	13
Better school discipline	7
A more flexible schedule	9
Better school facilities	9

Example: 29 per cent of the students mentioned that more relevant courses would help to make school more interesting.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one factor.

Students who stay in school view the effective teacher as one who explains the material (46 per cent), listens (35 per cent), and is easy going (35 per cent). Ineffective teachers were reported to have poor control of the classroom (42 per cent), to have inconsistent approaches in dealing with students (32 per cent), poor communication (30 per cent) and poor preparation for classes (30 per cent). Tables 4.3.13 and 4.3.14 summarize the characteristics of the effective and ineffective teacher as viewed by the school stayer.

TABLE 4.3.13

Characteristics of an Effective Teacher: The Percentage of Stayers Who Mentioned Each Feature

Characteristic	Percent
Understands, listens	35
Interested in students	15
Fair	28
Helps students	26
Explains things clearly	46
Cares	19
Easy going and humorous	35
Well prepared	13
Good class control	17

Example: 35% of the students mentioned "understands, or listens" as a characteristic of an effective teacher.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one feature.

TABLE 4.3.14

Characteristics of an Ineffective Teacher: The Percentage of Stayers Who Mentioned Each Feature

Characteristic	Percent
Ignores poor students	11
Inconsistent	32
Poor communication	30
Poor class control	42
Poorly prepared	30
Boring	25
Bad tempered	19
Ridicules students	7

Example: 32% of the students felt that inconsistency was a characteristic of an ineffective teacher.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one feature.

4.3.9 Summary

Characteristics of school stayers were identified in this section. The findings are based on interviews with fifty-six students who were likely to remain in school until graduation. Key results indicate the following stayer characteristics:

- most stayers (80 per cent) lived with their two parents;
- about one-half of the stayers' parents had attended high school;
- fewer than one-half of the stayers reported that another member of their family had dropped out of school;
- the school stayers feel positively about their school performance and relationships with other people;
- only 30 per cent of the stayers reported their worst grade to be below 50 per cent;
- the majority of stayers (80 per cent) liked courses which they found "interesting";
- sports, extracurricular activities, and teachers were reported as positive features of school while discipline was the most frequently mentioned dislike;
- the majority (95 per cent) felt that school completion was important;
- stayers felt that school could be made more interesting and helpful if courses were more relevant, if there were more extracurricular activities and better teachers.

In the following section, the results of the interviews with potential school leavers (high risk students) are presented.

4.4 High risk student interviews

4.4.1 The high risk student

In this section, the characteristics, school history, and perspectives of the high risk student are discussed. The high risk student is a student identified by school administrators and teachers as being highly likely to leave school prior to grade 12 graduation. These students were attending school and were interviewed in the schools. High risk students from 16 schools including junior high, senior high and combination junior/senior high schools were interviewed. It should be remembered throughout this section that the high risk student identification was undertaken by the school staff and reflects the judgement of the staff regarding potential school leavers. Therefore, the sample of students selected may not provide the best representation of the potential leaver since biases in perception can occur. The degree of correspondence between the characteristics of the selected high risk students and those of the identified school leavers is discussed in the analysis and interpretation section of the report (Chapter V).

4.4.2 Sample characteristics

Appendix C provides details on the number of high risk students interviewed by school attended and by school jurisdiction. A total of 50 personal interviews took place with high risk students.

Ten per cent of the high risk students with whom interviews were conducted were in grade 7, 12 per cent were in grade 8, 38 per cent in grade 9, 14 per cent in grade 10, 16 per cent in grade 11 and 10 per cent in grade 12. The sample thus was made up of 60 per cent junior high students and 40 per cent high school students.

The age distribution of the high risk students surveyed is provided in Table 4.4.1. Eighty per cent of those interviewed were between the ages of 14 and 17 years. Students in age groupings under 14 years old and over 17 years old each accounted for 10 per cent of the sample. Significantly more males than females were interviewed, as 78 per cent of the interviews were conducted with males and 22 per cent with females.

Note: Tables may not total exactly 100 per cent due to rounding of percentage figures.

TABLE 4.4.1

Age Distribution of High Risk Students: Percentage in Each Age Category

Age (Years)	Percent n=50
Less than 14	10
14	22
15	26
16	22
17	10
Older than 17	10
	100%

Example: 22 per cent of the high risk students were 14 years years of age at the time of the interview.

A total of 46 per cent of the high risk student group was of Native ancestry while the remainder (54 per cent) was classified as Caucasian.

4.4.3 Familial and social background

The students were asked to identify the first language they spoke at home. For 58 per cent of the sample this was English, for 26 per cent this was Cree and for 10 per cent it was German. The survey also asked the student to identify the language presently spoken at home. English was spoken by 62 per cent, Cree by 10 per cent and German by 10 per cent. The remaining 10 per cent of students indicated they spoke a combination of English and their mother tongue.

Over half of the students (68 per cent) stated they lived with both their mother and father at the time of the interview. Single parent households accounted for 24 per cent of students' living arrangements: 20 per cent resided with their mother and 4 per cent resided with their father. Grandparents, foster parents, other guardians, and living independently were each indicated by one of the surveyed students.

Of the total number of high risk students interviewed, only 10 per cent had fathers who graduated from grade 12 and 22 per cent had mothers who graduated from high school. Details of the parents' education levels are given in Table 4.4.2.

TABLE 4.4.2

Parents' Education:
Percentage of Fathers and Mothers
Who Attained Specific Levels of Schooling

Grade Level	Father (%)	Mother (%)
Elementary	12	14
Junior High	24	26
High School	20	32
(H.S. Diploma)	(10)	(22)
None/Don't Know	44	28
	100%	100%

Example: 12 per cent of fathers had less than grade 7 education, while 14 per cent of the mothers had less than grade 7.

TABLE 4.4.3

Parents' Occupations:
Percentage of Parents in Each Occupation Category

Occupation	Father (%)	Mother (%)
Farming	16	8
Tech-Voc-Para-Professional	22	2
Prof-Small Business	4	4
Service	12	14
Construction	10	2
Clerical	2	12
Housewife	-	42
Other	34	16
	100%	100%

Example: 16 per cent of fathers were in a farming occupation; 14 per cent of the mothers were in service occupations.

The fathers' occupations, in order of highest frequency, are: technical/vocational/para-professional (22 per cent), farming (16 per cent), service (12 per cent) and construction (10 per cent). Just over 40 per cent of the students had mothers whose primary occupation was "housewife". Fourteen per cent of the students' mothers were employed in the service sector, while 12 per cent were engaged in clerical jobs.

When asked if any of their brothers or sisters had dropped out of school, 68 per cent of the sample responded affirmatively, while 32 per cent stated that none of their siblings had dropped out.

All high risk students interviewed were asked whether any of their friends had left school. Four-fifths of the students did have friends who had left school prior to graduation. Of this group, 18 per cent replied that most of their friends had dropped out of school, 10 per cent stated half their friends had left and 72 per cent stated that only a few of their friends had left school.

Twenty-three per cent of high risk students surveyed had a part-time job while in school; 77 per cent did not.

4.4.4 School history and performance

4.4.4.1 Boarding and busing

Forty-two per cent of high risk students attended school in one population centre only throughout their school career. Fifty-eight per cent attended school in more than one centre; 30 per cent in two different population centres, 14 per cent in three different centres and 14 per cent in four or more centres.

Five students interviewed boarded away from home. Three of these were at a distance of less than 30 miles from home, one was 120 miles and the other 800 miles. When asked if they liked boarding out, all five said yes and gave the following reasons:

- chance to experience some freedom
- lived with relations - liked it
- had friends there
- lots to do, good meals, kids my age

Fifty-two per cent of the interviewed students took a bus to school at one time or another during their school years.

4.4.4.2 Performance

Fifty-eight per cent of those interviewed felt their performance in school would be rated as average, while 24 per cent evaluated their performance as poor and 16 per cent as good.

The subjects in which the students obtained their best and worst grades are indicated in Table 4.4.4. Thirty per cent stated their best subject is math, 22 per cent indicated science, and 16 per cent indicated English. Math was reported as a worst subject by many students (32 per cent), as was social studies (22 per cent) and English (14 per cent).

TABLE 4.4.4

The Best and Worst Subjects of the High Risk Students: The Percentage of Students Mentioning Specific Subjects

Subject	Best Grade n=50 (%)	Worst Grade n=50 (%)
Math	30	32
Science	22	10
Social studies	6	22
English	16	14
Vocational-shop	8	4
Business	2	4
Phys. Ed.	6	2
Academic Options	-	4
Non-academic options	10	8
	100%	100%

Example: 30 per cent of the students mentioned math as their best subject, while 32 per cent mentioned math as their worst subject.

The students were asked their marks in their best and worst subjects. In the best subject, the distribution of marks was as follows:

- 80 or better reported by 54 per cent of students;
- 70-79 reported by 14 per cent of students;
- 60-69 reported by 14 per cent of students;
- 59 or less reported by 18 per cent of students.

The distribution of marks in the worst subjects was as follows:

- 70 or better reported by 12 per cent of students;
- 60-69 reported by 2 per cent of students;
- 50-59 reported by 5 per cent of students;
- 21-49 reported by 57 per cent of students;
- 0-20 reported by 24 per cent of students.

Students were asked a series of questions dealing with how they felt the school staff perceived them. Sixty per cent of students thought that, if asked, their teachers would indicate they worked hard in school; 40 per cent felt their teachers did not think they worked hard. Eighty-four per cent felt their teachers would say they are co-operative in school and 60 per cent thought their teachers would indicate they do well in their course work. Eighty per cent felt their school principal would not think them a discipline problem and only 20 per cent felt their principal would view them as a discipline problem. If their teachers were asked about their attendance, 42 per cent of the students felt the teacher would say they attended regularly, 24 per cent felt teachers would say they "missed a bit" and 32 per cent felt teachers would say they "missed a lot".

4.4.4.3 Social interaction

A series of questions asked the student to rate how well he gets along with others. The response choices were good, fair and poor. Fifty-eight per cent indicated they get along well with their teachers, 36 per cent fair and 6 per cent poorly. The relationship with parents was described as good by 76 per cent of students, fair by 16 per cent and poor by 8 per cent. The relationship with other students was rated as good by 48 per cent of students, fair by 46 per cent and poor by 6 per cent.

When questioned about the number of friends they have at school, 72 per cent stated that they have many, 12 per cent stated they have some, and 14 per cent stated they have only a few friends.

Just over half (52 per cent) of the surveyed high risk students stated they were involved in extracurricular activities. The activities in which they were involved are summarized in Table 4.4.5. Of the students who participated in these activities, most (85 per cent) were involved in sports. Other activities mentioned include music (15 per cent), students' union (7 per cent) and theatre (4 per cent). Those students who were not involved in extracurricular activities were asked why they were not. One-third were not interested and 22 per cent stated there was nothing available. Other reasons included living too far from school, needed to work at home, and the age of the student (too old), each accounting for 4 per cent of non-participants.

TABLE 4.4.5

Extracurricular Activities:
The Percentage of High Risk Students Who Mentioned
Participation in Specific Extracurricular Activities

Activity	N=22 (%)
Sports	85
Music	15
Student Union	7
Theatre	4

Example: 85 per cent of the participants in extracurricular activities indicated they were involved in sports.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since the students could mention more than one activity.

4.4.5 Feelings about school

The high risk students were asked to indicate their views about their school experiences. Table 4.4.6 provides information on the subjects which the high risk students liked and disliked. Respondents could list two subjects in in each category. The preferred subjects were physical education (30 per cent), non-academic options (30 per cent), math (28 per cent) and English (28 per cent), while those subjects disliked by many students are math (38 per cent) and science (26 per cent).

TABLE 4.4.6

Subjects Liked and Disliked:
The Percentage of High Risk Students Mentioning
Specific Subjects

Subject	Liked n=50 (%)	Disliked n=50 (%)
Math	28	38
Science	20	26
Social studies	12	16
English	28	18
Vocational shop	16	4
Business	2	4
Phys. Ed.	30	-
Academic options	4	6
Non-academic options	30	4

Example: 28 per cent of the high risk students mentioned that math was a favourite subject.
38 per cent of the high risk students mentioned that math was a disliked subject.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could identify more than one subject.

Reasons for liking and disliking courses are provided in Tables 4.4.7 and 4.4.8. The high risk student typically explained that his liking for a course was related to doing well in the course (56 per cent) or finding the subject matter interesting (46 per cent). The two most frequently mentioned reasons provided for disliking a course were that the course is too hard, or poor grades are obtained in it (64 per cent), and that the student dislikes the teacher (24 per cent). It should be noted that about one-fifth of the students interviewed stated there were no courses they disliked.

TABLE 4.4.7

Reasons for Liking Courses: Percentage of Students Mentioning Specific Reasons

Reason	Percent n=50
Did well in course	56
Educational-useful	12
Interesting - liked it	46
Worked with hands	22
Like exercise and sports	14
Liked the teacher	12

Example: 56 per cent of the high risk students mentioned that they liked the courses in which they did well.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could provide more than one reason.

TABLE 4.4.8

Reasons for Disliking Courses: Percentage of Students Mentioning Specific Reasons

Reason	Percent n=39
Too hard - poor grades	64
Not relevant	8
Boring	8
Disliked teacher	24
Too much homework	4

Example: 64 per cent of the high risk students mentioned that they disliked courses that were too hard.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could provide more than one reason.

Factors associated with school, aside from courses, which the high risk student liked and disliked are summarized in Tables 4.4.9 and 4.4.10.

TABLE 4.4.9

Features Liked About School:
Percentage of Students Mentioning Specific Features

Feature	Percent n=50
Learning	18
Friends	60
Sports	42
Extra-curricular activities	14
Field trips	2
Teachers	14

Example: 60 per cent of the high risk students mentioned that they liked the presence of friends at school.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one factor.

TABLE 4.4.10

Features Disliked About School:
Percentage of Students Mentioning Specific Features

Feature	Percent n=50
Teachers	30
Homework	18
Discipline	20
Peer pressure	12
School work	4
Busing	4
School not relevant	2
School schedule	8
Other	16

Example: 30 per cent of the students mentioned that they disliked the teachers.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one factor.

Two factors were mentioned most frequently as likes: friends (60 per cent) and sports (42 per cent). Other features liked about school included learning (18 per cent), extracurricular activities (14 per cent) and teachers (14 per cent). The most common dislikes associated with school were the teachers, mentioned by 30 per cent of the sample; discipline, mentioned by 20 per cent, and homework, mentioned by 18 per cent. Peer pressure, which should be interpreted as meaning pressure from other students to leave school, be truant or misbehave, was noted as a dislike by 12 per cent of high risk students.

Slightly fewer than two-thirds (64 per cent) of the high risk students felt they were treated fairly at school. Of the 36 per cent who felt they were not treated fairly, 67 per cent felt that teachers treated them unfairly, 6 per cent felt the principal treated them unfairly and 22 per cent blamed the other students.

Seventy-four per cent of the respondents felt discipline in their school was fair, while 26 per cent felt it was not. Discipline inconsistent with the misbehaviour, strapping, and excessive leniency were the concerns mentioned by those citing school discipline as unfair (each mentioned by 30 per cent of this group).

4.4.6 The school leaving experience

The high risk students were asked several questions about their school leaving considerations. Of the high risk students interviewed, 90 per cent had considered leaving school before grade 12 graduation. Sixty per cent of these students had considered leaving within the previous month and 85 per cent had considered leaving within the previous six months. Their reasons for considering leaving school are summarized in Table 4.4.11. The reason most often given for thinking about leaving school was a lack of interest in school (38 per cent). The two next most frequent responses (21 per cent each) were problems with teachers and administrators, and the desire to earn money. Other responses obtaining high frequencies were: family problems (17 per cent), poor grades (14 per cent), and peer pressure (12 per cent).

TABLE 4.4.11

Reasons For Leaving School:
The Percentage of High Risk Students Who Mentioned Specific
Reasons For Considering Leaving School

Reason	Percent n=50
Poor grades	14
Want vocational education	5
Family problems	17
Trouble out of school	5
Peer pressure	12
Wants to earn money	21
Problems with teachers and administrators	21
Emotional problems	-
Not interested in school	38
Schools too far	5
Have to board out	-
Need to help at home	5
Had a job	-

Example: 14 per cent of high risk students mentioned poor grades as a reason for considering leaving school.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since student could provide more than one reason.

In discussing the possibility of their leaving school, most high risk students turned to their parents (67 per cent) or friends (61 per cent) (see Table 4.4.12). Significantly fewer students talked to school staff; 14 per cent talked to counsellors or to school administrators and 9 per cent talked to teachers. Teachers and counsellors encouraged the students to stay in school, as did most parents. Approximately one-third of the school administrators and the students' friends did not encourage them to remain in school. Friends were more likely than any other group to understand the students' concerns about leaving school.

TABLE 4.4.12

Consultation On Leaving:
Percentage of High Risk Students Who Consulted With Others When Considering Leaving, and the Percentage Who Felt They Were Understood or Encouraged to Stay

Position	Consult (%)		Understand (% of Yes)		Encouraged to Stay (% of Yes)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Counsellors	14	86	80	20	100	-
Teachers	9	91	75	25	100	-
Administrators	14	86	67	33	67	33
Parents	67	33	75	25	83	17
Friends	61	39	96	4	68	32

Example: 14 per cent of the high risk group had consulted with counsellors when they had considered leaving school. Of these students, 80 per cent felt that the counsellors understood, and 100% were encouraged to stay in school by the counsellors.

Students who had considered leaving school were asked why they remained in school (see Table 4.4.13). The two reasons most often given were that schooling is essential to obtain a good job (27 per cent) and that they wanted to graduate (23 per cent). Other reasons given were: peer pressure to remain in school; the student had developed an interest in school; had difficulty in securing a job; and school "is something to do"; each of these reasons was indicated by 9 per cent of those who had considered leaving school.

The respondents were then asked if they were likely to remain in school until graduation. Forty-three per cent of those who answered this question felt that they were likely to remain, 28 per cent felt they might leave and 30 per cent did not know what would happen.

Seventy per cent of those interviewed felt that high school completion is very important in getting a job, 20 per cent felt it is somewhat important and 10 per cent felt that school completion is not important.

TABLE 4.4.13

Reasons for Remaining in School:
Percentage of Students Who Mentioned Each Reason

Reason	Percent
Friends (peer pressure	9
Desire to graduate	23
Got interested in school	9
Too young to quit	7
Need school for good job	27
Could not get a job	9
Teachers and administrators got better	5
Started getting along at home	5
Something to do	9
Parents forced me	7
Sports	-
Don't know	7

Example: 23 per cent of the high risk students mentioned that they decided to remain in school because they wanted to graduate.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could supply more than one reason.

4.4.7 The future

The high risk students were questioned about what they expected to be doing five years from now. Most (88 per cent) expected to be working. Twelve per cent felt they were not likely to be working. Of those who expected to be working, 28 per cent would like to be engaged in technical vocational or para-professional occupations, 13 per cent in farming and 13 per cent in construction. Of the students who did not expect to be working, three students (50 per cent) anticipated that they would be going to school, one student expected to be a housewife and another expected to be unemployed.

4.4.8 The high risk student's perspective

The high risk students were asked to comment on early school leaving, and on aspects of the school environment.

Table 4.4.14 presents the high risk students' ratings of the importance of different factors which contribute to early school leaving. The four factors rated as being most influential in student dropout are: social factors such as alcohol, drugs, pregnancy (56 per cent), student home life (50 per cent), poor grades (42 per cent), and teaching approaches (40 per cent). Factors not deemed to be important influences include the distance of school from home, school facilities, peer pressure and the relevancy of courses.

TABLE 4.4.14

Importance of Reasons For Early Leaving:
The Percentage of High Risk Students Who Considered Each Reason
To Be Very Important, Somewhat Important, or Not Important

Reasons	Very Important (%)	Somewhat Important (%)	Not Important (%)
Distance, home-school	22	16	60
Need for income	32	44	18
Peer pressure	24	26	48
Not interested	34	38	24
Poor grades	42	26	28
Desire to work	36	38	22
Courses irrelevant	30	26	40
School atmosphere	34	40	24
Home life	50	30	18
School facilities	14	26	56
Teaching approaches	40	36	20
No home encouragement	36	30	32
Social factors (drugs, etc.)	56	18	22

Example: 22 per cent of the students felt that distance was a very important factor contributing to school leaving; 16 per cent felt it was somewhat important, and 60 per cent not important.

Note: The total percentage across each row may not add up to 100 as some students may not have responded.

When asked whom they felt to be most responsible for students' dropping out of school, over half of those interviewed felt the leavers themselves must take responsibility (see Table 4.4.15). About one-quarter of those interviewed felt teachers and administrators should assume the primary responsibility while one-fifth felt parents to be most responsible.

Secondary responsibility for students dropping out was most often attributed to friends (38 per cent), teachers and administrators (27 per cent), and parents (24 per cent).

TABLE 4.4.15

Responsibility For Early Leaving:
Percentage of High Risk Students Who Considered Particular People To Be Responsible

Person	Most Responsible (%)	Second Most Responsible (%)
Leavers themselves	54	5
Friends	-	38
Parents	18	24
Teachers and administrators	24	27
Community	4	5
Employers	-	-
	100%	100%

Example: 54 per cent of the students considered the leavers themselves to be primarily responsible for early school leaving.

When questioned about programs that they would like to take but which were not offered in their school, one-quarter of the high risk students mentioned vocational education. Other subjects mentioned most frequently included social science courses (10%) and physical education (10%) (see Table 4.4.16).

TABLE 4.4.16

Desired Areas of Study:
The Percentage of High Risk Students Who Mentioned Specific Areas of Study

Frequently Mentioned Areas of Study	Percent
Vocational education	26
Business education	4
Clerical	2
Computer skills	8
Life skills	8
Natural sciences	6
Social sciences	10
Local history and culture	2
Physical education	10
Beauty culture	6

Example: 26 per cent of the high risk students mentioned that they would like vocational education.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one subject.

High risk students were asked to indicate the types of changes they felt would make school more helpful and interesting. The results are summarized in Table 4.4.17. Each student could offer up to three suggestions. The factors identified most often were: making courses more relevant and increasing the variety of courses offered (28 per cent) providing more extracurricular activities (24 per cent) and better teachers (22 per cent). Smaller class size was mentioned by 12 per cent of the respondents, and 10 per cent suggested that schools be situated closer to home.

Students were asked to indicate up to three characteristics of effective teachers and ineffective teachers. Their responses are presented in Tables 4.4.18 and 4.4.19. The characteristics of a good teacher cited most often are the ability to explain things clearly (38 per cent), an easy-going, humorous disposition (32 per cent), understanding and listening to the students (30 per cent) and providing extra help for students (28 per cent).

TABLE 4.4.17

Keeping Students In School: Percentage of Students Who Mentioned Each Factor

Factors	Percent
Courses more relevant, more variety	28
Better teachers	22
Schools closer to home	10
More extra-curricular activities	24
Smaller classes	12
Better counselling to encourage staying	6
Better career counselling	6
Better home life	4
Parent involvement and encouragement	4
More flexible schedule	6
Facility changes	8

Example: 28 per cent of the students mentioned that more relevant courses or more variety would help to keep students in school.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one factor.

Characteristics of ineffective teachers include poor class control (30 per cent), poor class preparation and an attitude of not caring, both mentioned by 28 per cent of respondents. Teachers who are bad tempered and poor at communicating were identified by 24 per cent of respondents as being ineffective.

TABLE 4.4.18

Characteristics of an Effective Teacher: The Percentage of Students Who Mentioned Each Feature

Characteristics	Percent
Understands, listens	30
Interested in children	10
Is fair	20
Helps children	28
Explains things clearly	38
Cares	20
Easy going and humorous	32
Well prepared	4
Good class control	18
Sets high standards	12

Example: 30 per cent of the students mentioned understanding or listening as a characteristic of an effective teacher.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one factor.

TABLE 4.4.19

Characteristics of an Ineffective Teacher: The Percentage of Students Who Mentioned Each Feature

Characteristics	Percent
Ignores poor students	14
Does not care	28
Poor communication	24
Poor class control	30
Poorly presented material	28
Boring	12
Bad tempered	24
Ridicules children	4
Poor role model	2

Example: 14 per cent of the students felt that an ineffective teacher ignores the poor students.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since students could mention more than one feature.

4.4.9 Summary

In order to identify potential early school leavers, it is necessary to be aware of their characteristics. Key points summarized in this section include the following:

- sixty-eight per cent of the high risk students lived in two-parent households;
- few had parents who had completed high school;
- sixty-eight per cent had brothers or sisters, and four-fifths had friends who had dropped out of school;
- fifty-eight per cent felt that their school performance was average;
- the majority (81 per cent) had failing grades in their worst subject;
- about one-half (52 per cent) were involved in extracurricular activities;
- features they liked about school included the presence of friends (60 per cent), and sports (42 per cent); dislikes included teachers (30 per cent) and discipline (20 per cent);
- ninety per cent had considered leaving school before graduation. The most common reason was lack of interest;
- few students (23 per cent) talked with school staff when they were considering leaving;
- seventy per cent felt that high school completion was important for obtaining employment; and
- high risk students felt that school could be made more interesting and helpful if courses were more relevant, if more extracurricular activities were provided, and teachers were better.

The characteristics of high-risk students are compared with those of early school leavers and stayers in Chapter V. In the following sections, information from interviews with parents of early school leavers is summarized.

4.5 Parents' interviews

4.5.1 The interview sample

In this section, the characteristics and perspectives of parents of early school leavers are presented. A total of 34 parents of early school leavers were interviewed. Sixteen schools were represented, providing an adequate cross-section of school/community size and location (see Appendix C). Seventy-nine per cent of those interviewed were mothers of former students since fathers were less available to participate. The majority interviewed were in their 40s and 50s, with a few younger parents in the sample.

In most of the homes (71 per cent) English was spoken, followed by Cree, English/Cree (15 per cent) and French (9 per cent). Most of the participants were married (88 per cent), with moderate sized families at home (3.3 children) when their child left school. The ethnic proportions of the sample were approximately two-thirds Caucasian and one-third Native.

Twenty-three per cent of the parents reported completing at least grade 12 requirements, but many (62 per cent) had completed only grade 10 coursework or less. The average level of schooling for leaver parents was approximately nine and one-half years. Table 4.5.1 summarizes parent grade level completions. Spouses (husband or wife) of the interviewed parents have similar grade 12 completion rates (20 per cent), with 64 per cent having completed grade 10 or less (see Table 4.5.2).

TABLE 4.5.1

Grade Completion of the Interviewed Parents:
The Percentage of Parents Who Completed Each Grade

Grade Completed		Percentage n=34
3		3
4		6
5		3
7		9
8		12
9		12
10		17
11		15
12	Average grade completed	17
13	by parents - grade level 9.6	6
		100%

Example: 17 per cent of the parents completed grade 10.
Note: Tables may not total exactly 100 per cent due to rounding of percentage figures.

TABLE 4.5.2

Grade Completion of Spouses:*
The Percentage of Spouses Who Completed Each Grade

Grade Completed	Percentage n=30
0	7
3	3
5	3
6	7
8	17
9	10
10	17
11	13
12	20
Higher than Grade 12	2
	100%
Average grade completed by spouse = grade level 9.0	

* Spouses were husbands or wives of parents interviewed in the study.

The parents of the early school leavers were employed primarily in the technical para-professional, service and household occupations. Table 4.5.3 summarizes the occupations of the parents.

TABLE 4.5.3

Occupations of Parents:*
The Percentage of Parents Reporting Specific Occupations

Occupation	Percentage n=64
Farming	5
Clerical	11
Tech/para-professional	34
Prof/small business	8
Sales	2
Construction/labour	5
Service	16
Household	20
	100%

* The occupations of both the interviewed parents and spouses have been combined in this table.

Example: 5 per cent of the parents reported farming occupations.

4.5.2 School involvement

The parents of school leavers who were interviewed reported good relations with the school (see Table 4.5.4). Many had regular teacher contact which was initiated by both themselves and the school (see Table 4.5.5). Most of the parents (77 per cent) attended some or all of the parent/teacher meetings, which were generally held two or more times a year. Those few who seldom or never attended reported poor English, no satisfaction, no PTA or their child's quitting, as reasons which keep them away. Of those parents who had attended meetings, 44 per cent reported them to be helpful in identifying concerns about their children dropping out while 56 per cent reported that few solutions to the problem were identified.

TABLE 4.5.4

Parent Relationships With School:
The Percentage of Parents Who Reported Their Relationship
To Be Good, Fair or Poor

Level	(n=33) Percentage
Good	67
Fair	27
Poor	6
	100%

Example: 67 per cent of the parents interviewed reported that they had good relationships with the school.

TABLE 4.5.5

Parent Contact With Teacher:
The Percentage of Parents Who Had Contact With Teachers
Often, Occasionally, or Never

Frequency	(n=33) Percentage
Often	46
Occasionally	37
Never	16
	100%

Example: 46 per cent of the parents had contact often with teachers.

Parent and community involvement with the school was strongly supported (78 per cent) by the parents interviewed in the study. They supported PTA (27 per cent), parent/teacher contact (23 per cent) and parent input into curriculum. The parents (22 per cent) who were opposed to increased school involvement offered the following reasons; teachers will not listen, teachers should run the school, did not want to pressure the child, and they had enough involvement already.

The parents were also asked how they and the community could become more involved with the school. The suggestions are summarized in Table 4.5.6.

Almost all of the parents interviewed (94 per cent) viewed high school completion as very important in getting a job.

TABLE 4.5.6

Parent Ideas For Increasing School Involvement:
The Percentage of Parents Who Mentioned Each Idea

Response	(n=22) Percentage
Parent volunteers	23
Parent aides	14
Parent/teacher contacts	27
Attend PTA	41
Teachers involved in communication	4
School support	9
Native education	4
Social use of school	9

Example: 23 per cent of the parents suggested that parents could become involved as volunteers in the schools.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since parents could offer more than one suggestion.

4.5.3 Early school leaving

Eighty-three per cent of the parents reported that more than one of their children had left school prior to receiving a diploma. One parent reported that nine children had dropped out. This high incidence is in keeping with the "family tradition" of leaving reported in the literature (Zamanzadeh and Price, 1978). About one-half of the first and second born left school early, while the rate of early leaving in subsequent children was significantly higher (Table 4.5.7).

TABLE 4.5.7.

Early School Leaving Rates of Birth Ordered Siblings: The Number of Siblings Who Had Attended High School, Completed High School, and the Proportion Who Had Left School

Child Birth Order	Number of Siblings Who Attended High School	Number of Siblings Who Completed High School	Proportion of Siblings Who Left High School (%)
1st	24	13	46
2nd	20	10	50
3rd	19	2	89
4th	8	3	62
5th	6	2	67
6th	3	0	100

Example: 24 of the first-born siblings had left high school. 13 had completed high school, leaving 46 per cent (n=11) who dropped out of school.

The parents were asked to provide some information about the last child in their family who had left school early, and the experience of early school leaving.

Some parents reported that the school leavers in their families had few friends (12 per cent); most were reported as having many friends (62 per cent) while a small number reported some friends (9 per cent). Eighteen per cent of the parents did not respond to the question. While most leavers usually got along well with their teachers (59 per cent), almost one in four (24 per cent) seldom got along with their teachers.

When asked the reason for this inability to get along, parents attributed the problem to student and educator personality characteristics which blocked effective communication. While some parents did not respond to questioning concerning success in course work, those who did respond were fairly evenly divided. Twenty-four per cent reported that their school leaver child's performance was "good" in school, 32 per cent reported it as "fair" and 27 per cent reported it as "poor".

When asked to identify who was most responsible for students' leaving school, parents most often selected the leaver (52 per cent), friends (32 per cent) and potential employers (30 per cent). Table 4.5.8. provides a summary of parents' perceptions concerning responsibility. However, when rating a list of factors affecting school leaving (Table 4.5.9), many parents

TABLE 4.5.8

Responsibility For Early School Leaving:
The Percentage of Parents Who Mentioned Each Type of Reason

Type of Reason	Percentage n=34
School leavers	52
Friends	32
Parents	26
Teachers	23
Administrators	6
The Community	9
Potential employers	30

Example: 52 per cent of the parents felt that school leavers themselves were responsible.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since parents could mention more than one category.

themselves took responsibility. They indicated lack of parent encouragement (73 per cent) and students' home life (71 per cent) as important factors related to early school leaving. However, teaching approaches (68 per cent), school atmosphere and social factors such as alcohol and drugs, were also identified as very important variables. Distance from school was not an important factor in school leaving according to most of the parents (65 per cent).

TABLE 4.5.9

Factors Affecting Early School Leaving: The Percentage of Parents Who Rated Each Factor as Very Important, Somewhat Important, or Not Important

Factor	Very Important (%)	Somewhat Important (%)	Not Important (%)
Distance from school	15	20	65
Need for income	29	24	47
Peer pressure	41	35	24
Not interested	56	29	15
Poor grades	50	32	18
Desire to start work	35	29	32
Course work not relevant	47	24	29
School atmosphere	65	15	20
Students home life	71	12	17
School facilities	24	35	38
Teaching approaches	68	24	8
Lack of parent encouragement	73	12	15
Social factors (alcohol-drug abuse, pregnancy)	65	12	21

Example: 15 per cent of the parents interviewed felt that distance from school was a very important factor; 20 per cent felt it was somewhat important, while 65 per cent felt it was not important.

Note: The total percentage across each row is approximately 100.

Parents were also asked to comment on the effect of school size. Sixty per cent of the parents of school leavers felt that the size of the school had an impact on the dropout rate. They most often cited lack of personal contact (25 per cent) and not knowing the other students (25 per cent) as detrimental to learning in the larger high schools. However, the availability of more options was viewed as a positive aspect of the larger schools. The more personal atmosphere of the smaller school was mentioned by 25 per cent, although smaller schools were seen as having fewer facilities.

After the students' decision to leave had been made, fewer than one-half of the parents (46 per cent) reported being contacted by the school. The contact generally consisted of a phone call from the principal or counsellor. The majority of those responding (64 per cent) reported that, to the best of their knowledge, no one at school attempted to help their child remain in school. When help was offered, counsellors, principals/vice-principals and teachers were the individuals who provided it. However, some parents (42 per cent) reported that educators did attempt to inform their son or daughter about the value of education. Alternate programs were recommended and schedule changes and extra help were also offered. The majority of the parents (75 per cent) responded negatively when asked if anything else could have been done to convince their child to remain in school. The remaining parents who responded to the question in the affirmative suggested that vocational education, tutoring, counselling and personal contact by the principal, school board or other administrators might have helped.

Parents were asked to indicate the two most important things that could have kept their child in school. The results of this question are summarized in Table 4.5.10.

Parents had various reactions and feelings about their child's decision to leave school. These are summarized in Tables 4.5.11 and 4.5.12. Many parents (29 per cent) encouraged their child to stay in school or stressed the need for education (20 per cent). One-half of the parents felt sad or disappointed by the decision.

TABLE 4.5.10

Retaining Early School Leavers:
The Percentage of Parents Who Suggested Specific Actions
Which Would Have Kept Their Child in School Longer

Action	Percentage (n=26)
More relevant courses	15
Better parent/administration communication	15
Better home life	12
Better teacher/student communications	15
More parent involvement and encouragement	15
Counselling	8
Other	19
	100%

Example: 14 per cent of the parents suggested that more relevant courses would have kept their child in school longer.

TABLE 4.5.11

Parent Reactions to Child's Decision to Leave School Early:
The Percentage of Parents Who Responded in Specific Ways

Response	Percentage (n=25)
Leaver did not tell parents	9
Parent said nothing	6
Suggested alternate school	3
Stressed need for education	20
Urged leaver to stay in school	29
Urged leaver to try harder	3
Suggested leaver do it for himself	6
Tried to find out why	12
Indicated family poor	6
Did nothing	6
	100%

Example: 20 per cent of the parents had stressed the need for education in response to their child's decision to leave school.

TABLE 4.5.12

Parent Feelings Concerning Child's Decision to Leave School Early: The Percentage of Parents Expressing Specific Feelings

Response	Percentage (n=28)
Disapproved	9
Approved	12
Sad/disappointed	50
Mad	3
Understood decision	20
Felt we failed	6
	100%

Example: 50 per cent of the parents felt sad or disappointed when their child decided to leave school.

4.5.4 School programs

Two-thirds (67 per cent) of the parents felt that additional courses could be offered for the potential school leaver. Vocational education was the area of study most often suggested (47 per cent) while courses in business education (12 per cent), computer skills (9 per cent) and natural sciences (9 per cent) were also suggested. In responding to the positive things which were happening in their school, parents cited administrators (23 per cent), teachers (21 per cent), the curriculum (18 per cent) and extracurricular activities (12 per cent). When asked why they liked what was happening, few responded (21 per cent); however two parents (6 per cent) mentioned involvement with the community. Others in the sample provided some additional reasons: variety of options, good teacher communications/relations, stress on morals and teaching the "3 Rs".

In order to improve the school system, parents recommended better teachers (29 per cent), a more effective curriculum (26 per cent), and more availability of counselling (18 per cent).

Parents were requested to provide information concerning the characteristics of an effective teacher (Table 4.5.13). The responses indicated that human qualities were most important; the effective teacher demonstrated understanding, interest, fairness and affability in working closely with the individuals in the classroom setting. Over half of the parents (54 per cent) offered good humour as the most important trait of the effective teacher.

TABLE 4.5.13

Primary Characteristics of Effective Teachers:
The Percentage of Parents Who Mentioned Each Characteristic

Teacher Characteristic	Percentage (n=34)
Good humour	54
Interested in children	45
Understands children	36
Explains work clearly	33
Fair	21

Example: 54 per cent of the parents mentioned that an effective teacher has a sense of humour.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since parents could indicate more than one characteristic.

Parent responses in defining the ineffective teacher were similarly human traits; the ineffective teacher was presented as an uncaring, poorly prepared bore who was unable to deal effectively with students. Most (63 per cent) rated an "I don't care" attitude, as the most important characteristic of the ineffective teacher. The primary characteristic for ineffective teachers are summarized in Table 4.5.14. A maximum of three responses were recorded for each parent.

TABLE 4.5.14

Primary Characteristics of Ineffective Teachers:
The Percentage of Parents Who Mentioned Each Characteristic

Teacher Characteristic	Percentage (n=34)
Does not care	63
Boring	30
Poorly prepared	21
Poor communicator	21
Ridicules students	18
Poor class control	18

Example: 63 per cent of the parents mentioned that an ineffective teacher "does not care".

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since parents could indicate more than one characteristic.

Table 4.5.15 reflects parents' ideas concerning the use of the community vocational centre (CVC) model in small schools in an effort to influence students to remain in school. Seventy-four per cent of the parents supported the CVC concept. Mobile education facilities were also approved (92 per cent); parents indicated that these facilities would offer students course variety (24 per cent), new options (20 per cent), relevant vocational education (20 per cent) and would increase student interest (24 per cent). However, 86 per cent of the parents were opposed to more correspondence courses. They said the courses were too hard (10 per cent), not for all students (47 per cent) and students left on their own did not work well (26 per cent). All of the respondents expressed concern about students' boarding out, and being away from their family.

TABLE 4.5.15

Support for the Community Vocational Centre (CVC) Concept in Small Schools: The Percentage of Parents Giving Each Response

Response	Percentage (n=19)
Maintains student interest	27
Offer vocational education	32
Not for school kids	10
Students treated as adults	16
Other	16
	100%

Example: Twenty-seven per cent of the parents felt that the CVC would help to maintain student interest.

4.5.5 Summary

Information was obtained through interviews with 34 parents of early school leavers. These data provide further understanding of the characteristics of the early leaver, and offer the parents' perspectives on the factors associated with early school leaving. Important points in this section include the following:

- ninety-four per cent viewed high school completion as important for getting a job;
- eighty-three per cent reported that more than one of their children had left school before graduating;
- the rate of early school leaving was lowest for first and second born, and increased as the birth order increased;
- parents identified lack of parental encouragement, students' home life, teaching approaches, and social factors as important contributors to early school leaving;
- most parents (64 per cent) reported that, to the best of their knowledge, no one at school had attempted to help their child remain in school;
- sixty per cent felt that school size had an impact on dropout rates;
- all parents expressed concern about the boarding situation;
- the majority supported the C.V.C. concept and mobile education and were opposed to correspondence courses;
- two-thirds felt that additional areas of study should be offered. Vocational education was most commonly reported; and
- parent and community involvement with the school was strongly supported by 78 per cent of the parents.

4.6 Teachers, counsellors, administrators interviews

4.6.1 The interview sample

This section discusses the results of interviews conducted with educators working in northern school jurisdictions. A total of 54 school and central office staff, including teachers, counsellors and administrators were personally interviewed. The sample was selected to represent a good cross-section of all three groups. The respondents came from all of the jurisdictions in which student/leaver interviews were conducted and from many of the schools. The relatively small sample size does not allow for disaggregation by individual grouping or by geographic area.

Table 4.6.1 presents a summary of the roles of those interviewed. All groups are well represented. Those who were interviewed will be referred to as the educators throughout this section of the report.

TABLE 4.6.1

Roles of Educators:
The Percentage of Interviewees in Each Category

Role	Percentage (n=54)
Teacher	32
Counsellor	13
School administrator	30
Central office staff	26
	100%

Example: 32 per cent of those interviewed were teachers.

Note: School administrator includes principal and vice-principal. Central office staff includes superintendent, assistant superintendent, program co-ordinators, etc.

Note: Tables may not total exactly 100 per cent due to rounding of percentage figures.

The years of experience of the educators are summarized in Table 4.6.2. The data indicate that a large majority of the sample (84 per cent) had worked in education for six or more years. A smaller percentage (72 per cent), but still high, had worked as educators in northern Alberta for more than five years. Sixty-two per cent of the sample indicated they planned to be in a northern Alberta school system five years from now while the remaining 38 per cent said they did not.

Eighty per cent of those interviewed were male and 20 per cent were female. This disproportionate split between the two is due to the relatively small number of females in central office professional staff and in school administration. Most of those interviewed were married and 65 per cent of them were parents. Only two people interviewed were Native. The others were primary Caucasian.

TABLE 4.6.2

Years of Experience:
The Percentage of Educators Who Had Various Years of Experience, and Specific Experience in Northern Alberta

Experience (Years)	Total Years of Experience (%) (n=54)	Experience In Northern Alberta (%) (n=54)
1 To 2	10	18
3 To 5	6	10
6 To 10	22	29
11 To 15	25	25
16+	37	18
	100%	100%

Example: 37 per cent of the educators had 16 or more years of experience, and 18 per cent had worked 16 or more years in northern Alberta.

4.6.2 The leaver

This section describes the educators' perceptions of the characteristics of the leavers and their reasons for dropping out of school.

Table 4.6.3 presents a summary of responses describing the educators' views about the characteristics of the early school leaver. Each respondent provided up to three characteristics. Poor grades (52 per cent), family does not value education (54 per cent), and not interested in school (46 per cent) were the three highest frequency responses. This was followed by lack of ambition (35 per cent), has a poor home life (33 per cent), and is a discipline problem (24 per cent). Being part of an ethnic minority was mentioned as a characteristic by 20 per cent of those interviewed. It is interesting to note that a combination of the three similar characteristics; not interested, lack of ambition and low self-esteem yields a very high proportion of the responses. It must be cautioned that these frequencies are not simply additive since the same respondent could have mentioned more than one of these.

TABLE 4.6.3

Characteristics of the Early Leaver:
The Percentage of Educators Who Mentioned Specific Characteristics

Characteristic	Percent (n=54)
Poor grades	52
Ethnic minority	20
Poor home life	33
Family does not value education	54
Is a discipline problem	24
Poor attendance	19
Is not interested in school	46
Lacks ambition/is a low achiever	35
Has low self-esteem	13
Friends influence negative/drugs-alcohol	17
Older than peers	9
Wants personal and financial independence	9

Example: 52 per cent of the educators felt that leavers were characterized by poor grades.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since educators could offer more than one response.

Ninety-four per cent of the educators felt that leavers were underachievers compared to stayers; 6 per cent felt they achieved at the expected level and no one felt they were over-achievers.

Seventy-eight per cent of the respondents believed that there were characteristic differences between the male and female early leavers. Some of the most frequently mentioned differences are presented in Table 4.6.4.

TABLE 4.6.4

Male/Female Differences:
The Percentage of Educators Who Mentioned Specific Differences Between Male and Female Leavers

Characteristic	Percent (n=54)
Education not valued for females	17
Males leave for jobs	27
Girls leave for pregnancy and marriage	30
Females leave earlier than males	17
Males leave earlier than females	8
	100%

Example: 17 per cent of the educators felt that education was not as valued by females.

Table 4.6.5 is a summary of the reasons that educators felt accounted for students' leaving school early. Forty-eight per cent felt that students leave simply because they are not interested in school or they hate it. Forty-six per cent said that dropouts have a poor home life with family problems and no home encouragement. Forty-four per cent said that students leave to earn money and forty-three per cent cited poor grades. It is interesting to note that educators did not mention a long bus ride as a reason for leaving and only one mentioned having to board out as a reason.

TABLE 4.6.5

Reasons For Leaving School:
The Percentage of Educators Who Feel That Each Factor Contributes To Early School Leaving

Reason	Percent (n=54)
Poor grades	43
Want vocational education	9
Poor home life	46
Delinquent behaviour (out of school)	9
Peer pressure	18
Wants to earn money	44
Problems with teachers and administrators	31
School too far (long bus ride)	0
Not interested in the course work	48
Have to board out	2
Cannot see value of education	9

Example: 43 per cent of the educators felt that poor grades contributed to early school leaving.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 per cent since respondents could provide more than one reason.

Educators were also asked to report the reasons for leaving school given by students. Fifty-six per cent noted that students reported that they were bored with school. Thirty-nine per cent said the students indicated they were leaving because they wanted to work or they wanted to be free of school.

The frequencies for these responses are presented in Table 4.6.6.

TABLE 4.6.6

Reasons Students Give For Leaving: The Percentage of Educators Who Noted Specific Reasons Given By Students

Reason	Percent (n=54)
Want to work	39
Would fail anyway	13
Bored with school	56
Want vocational education	6
Financial problems	4
Problems with teachers	15
School not relevant	9
Lack of community caring	4
Need to help at home	4

Example: 39 per cent of the educators reported that students said they wanted to work.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since respondents could provide more than one reason.

Table 4.6.7 indicates whom the educators considered to be responsible for early school leaving. Thirty-one per cent felt the parents are most responsible, 23 per cent felt it is the school leavers themselves and 17 per cent mentioned the influence of the leavers' friends. Twenty four per cent felt the parents to be the second most responsible. This is followed by the leavers themselves (18 per cent), teachers (18 per cent) and the community (18 per cent). It is obvious that the educators put the bulk of the responsibility on the parents followed closely by the leavers themselves.

TABLE 4.6.7

Responsibility For Students' Leaving School:
The Percentage of Educators Who Felt Various People To Be
Responsible For Early School Leaving

Whom	Most Responsible (%)	Second Most Responsible (%)
School leavers themselves	23	18
Friends	17	8
Parents	31	24
Teachers	2	18
Administrators	4	8
Community	14	18
Employers	6	6
Others	4	2
	100%	100%

Example: 23 per cent of the educators felt the school leavers themselves to be most responsible for early school leaving; 18 per cent felt the school leavers to be second most responsible.

4.6.3 The at-risk student

Table 4.6.8 presents the grade levels at which educators feel at-risk students become identifiable. Sixty per cent felt that the potential leaver could be identified between grades 5 and 8. The highest frequency (23 per cent) believe that this identification is possible at the grade 7 level.

Table 4.6.9 presents the characteristics of the at-risk student. The two major characteristics of the potential leaver identified by the educators are poor attendance (43 per cent) and lacking interest in school work (41 per cent). Low grades (35 per cent) and discipline problem (26 per cent) also rate fairly high.

TABLE 4.6.8

Grade Level Identification of Potential Leaver: The Percentage of Educators Who Felt That Potential Leavers Can Be Identified At Specific Grade Levels

Grade Level	Percent (n=54)
1	4
2	2
3	9
4	9
5	13
6	11
7	23
8	13
9	9
10	6
11	2
	100%

Example: 23 per cent of the educators felt that early school leavers could be identified in grade 7.

TABLE 4.6.9

Characteristics of the At-Risk Student: The Percentage of Educators Who Mentioned Specific Characteristics of At-Risk Students

Characteristic	Percent (n=54)
Low grades	35
Failed grades.	11
Easily distracted or bored	13
Poor attendance	43
Negative peer pressure	7
Lacks interest in school work	41
No involvement in school activities	9
Discipline problem	26
Little family encouragement	13

Example: 35 per cent of the educators mentioned that high risk students were likely to have low grades.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since educators could indicate more than one characteristic.

4.6.4 The early leaver problem and remediation measures

This section explores the dropout rates, causes, responsibilities and various means of preventing early school leaving.

Eighty per cent of those interviewed felt the dropout rate is a significant problem in their school or school system; 20 per cent felt it is not.

Table 4.6.10 summarizes what the educators consider as acceptable dropout rates in their school and school district. Forty-seven per cent stated that 6 per cent to 10 per cent per year is acceptable at the high school level. Eighty-seven per cent indicated it should be below 10 per cent. At the junior high level, 89 per cent felt it should be below 5 per cent; forty-two percent felt the rate should be zero. At the elementary level, 91 per cent indicated it should be zero.

TABLE 4.6.10

Acceptable Dropout Rates:
The Percentage of Educators Who Accept Specific Dropout Rates
For High School, Junior High and Elementary Students

Rate	High School (%)	Junior High (%)	Elementary (%)
0%	19	42	91
0% - 5%	21	47	9
6% - 10%	47	9	-
11% - 15%	9	2	-
16% - 20%	2	-	-
21%+	2	-	-
	100%	100%	100%

Example: 19 per cent of educators felt a zero dropout rate to be acceptable for high school; 42 per cent felt a zero dropout rate to be acceptable for junior high.

When asked to identify one thing they would do to reduce the dropout rate, 41 per cent responded that they would implement program changes that meet the needs of students. Seventeen per cent would opt to improve community-school relationships and 17 per cent would provide better and more guidance counselling. Life skills and vocational programs were mentioned by 11 per cent.

Table 4.6.11 summarizes the approaches that educators consider could be taken at the school level to reduce dropout rates. Forty-four of the educators responded to this question. Each respondent could provide up to five responses. The need for more programs such as vocational, work experience and life skills was identified most frequently.

TABLE 4.6.11

Dropout Rate Reduction:
The Percentage of Educators Who Felt That Certain Approaches Could Be Taken At The School Level

Approaches	Percent (n=44)
Counselling	23
More vocational programs	36
Work experience programs	11
Alternate programs (e.g. life skills)	34
School more flexible to meet individual needs	23
Better parent-school communication	11
Better student-teacher relations	16
Adjust curriculum to local needs	20

Example: 23 per cent of the educators felt that counselling could help to reduce the drop-out rate.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since educators could provide more than one response.

The educators were also asked to indicate what might be done outside the school system to reduce the dropout rate. Of the total sample, only thirty-one people answered this question, primarily because they found it difficult to answer without having time for thought. Thirty-two per cent felt better social services and volunteer groups would help and 26 per cent felt a positive change in community attitude to education would be good (see Table 4.6.12).

TABLE 4.6.12

Dropout Rate Reduction:
The Percentage of Educators Who Felt That Certain Approaches Could Be Taken Outside The School System

Approaches	Percent (n=31)
Change community attitude to education	26
Closer school community relations	17
Local business involvement in school programs	14
Better social services and volunteer groups	32
Changes in community social conditions	19

Example: 26 per cent of the educators felt that changing community attitudes to education would help reduce the dropout rate.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 per cent since educators could provide more than one response.

Seventy-three per cent felt that the size of the school has an impact on dropout rates while twenty-seven per cent said it does not. Fifty-four per cent said that a big school is not desirable because it is too impersonal and contributes to student alienation. Thirteen per cent said big schools are conducive to poor student-staff relationships. Thirty-three per cent said that small schools are not preferable because they limit the courses and programs that can be offered. The majority of educators felt that smaller schools were preferable for having a positive impact on dropout rates.

Eighty-seven per cent of educators interviewed indicated their school or district had no set of procedures to follow when a student was identified as a potential dropout. Most who did indicate that a procedure was available cited counselling as that procedure. Fifty-three per cent reported that they interviewed dropouts, and most followed this with counselling where necessary.

Eighty-four per cent indicated that they have programs in their schools that make students aware of the value of education and expose them to options available with further education. Sixteen per cent said that no programs are available in their schools. Of those with available programs, 49 per cent said that they have career counselling. The extent of career counselling varies considerably. In some of the larger high schools it is a full program with considerable detail. In other places it consists primarily of a half-day film and talk session. Another 30 per cent said they provide general counselling for career and guidance.

Thirty-five per cent rated the effectiveness of existing programs as very good, 26 per cent as good and 22 per cent as satisfactory. Seventy-one per cent felt that value of education programs and career counselling would be effective in reducing dropout rates if presented to all students. Twenty-six per cent felt the programs should begin at a grade 9 level and 26 per cent felt that they should begin at grade 7. Seventy-five per cent felt they should be introduced after the junior high level.

Seventy-nine per cent of the educators indicated that there are programs which are not offered at their schools that potential leavers would like to take. The vast majority (86 per cent) specified vocational education programs as being most beneficial for students. This is followed by life skills programs (36 per cent), computer skills (19 per cent), business education (14 per cent) and career counselling (14 per cent).

When asked if smaller schools, using unconventional models such as the community vocational colleges, would influence students to remain in school longer, 38 of the educators answered. Of these, 23 (60 per cent) said "yes" and 15 (40 per cent) said "no". Those in favour indicated that these models would be good for vocational programs, could provide more personal instruction and a more flexible approach to education. Some cautioned that children are not often responsible enough and need structure, that it is financially not practical, and that this format should be for special courses only.

Seventy per cent indicated that mobile education facilities would have a positive impact on student retention. They felt it would broaden programs and be especially good for vocational education. Those who were not in favour indicated that consistent student contact is preferable and not possible with mobile education.

Seventy-five per cent indicated that education by correspondence is not a solution to the dropout rate. Twenty-four per cent said it would help. The others felt it is too impersonal and that past experience has shown a very low success rate. Those who said yes indicated that it would work if a tutor were provided.

Eighteen rural school educators were asked to discuss the impacts of boarding out and long bus rides and possible alternatives. They were fairly unanimous in indicating that most of the existing boarding situations are rather bad and lead directly to students' quitting. Long bus rides result in a long day for young people and make the school experience unpleasant. The alternatives they suggested included group homes run by Natives and either K-9 schools or K-12 schools in all communities.

Most of the educators who responded felt that a change in community attitudes to education is necessary to affect the dropout rate at the community level.

Many indicated that organized activities through clubs would also help.

Seventy per cent indicated that there is some parent-community involvement in the schools. Half of these people indicated this involvement consists of a parent-teacher association working through normal school channels. The others identified the involvement as consisting of one of the following:

- parents' volunteer activities at the school;
- community school boards; and
- career orientation from the local business community.

Seventy-two per cent felt that parent-community involvement has a positive effect on dropout rates because it provides a better understanding of the school function in the community and reduces parent apathy about education. Eighty-two per cent felt that more parent-community involvement would help reduce the dropout rate. Most of these (43 per cent) felt this should focus on selling parents on the value of education and removing their fear of school. Twenty-nine per cent said there should be direct parent involvement in school policy.

4.6.5 The teacher

The interviewees identified what they considered to be the traits of an effective and ineffective teacher, in general, and for the northern Alberta content. Also presented in this section are the educators'views with regard to teacher training.

Table 4.6.13 presents the characteristics of an ineffective teacher. One-half of the educators identified an ineffective teacher as being one who is not concerned with children. This is a subject/content oriented teacher, not one who teaches children. This is followed by a teacher with no compassion (35 per cent) and one who is not organized (33 per cent).

TABLE 4.6.13

Characteristics of an Ineffective Teacher: The Percentage of Educators Who Mentioned Each Characteristic

Characteristic	Percent (n=54)
Not concerned with children	50
Does not know material	15
Does not present material well	19
Not organized	33
Imposes personal values	11
Cannot discipline properly	26
No compassion	35
Not interested in the job	22
Impatient	7
Rigid, narrow-minded	22

Example: 50 per cent of the educators felt that ineffective teachers were not concerned with children.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since respondents could report more than one characteristic.

TABLE 4.6.14

Characteristics of an Effective Teacher: The Percentage of Educators Who Mentioned Each Characteristic

Characteristic	Percent (n=54)
Empathizes with students	70
Broad-minded, flexible	26
Patient	20
Treats children as equal	13
Knows job area	37
Is well organized	19
Cares about the job	24
Explains things clearly	15
Firm, good discipline	15
Creative	13

Example: 70 per cent of the educators felt that an effective teacher empathizes with students.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since respondents could report more than one characteristic.

In Table 4.6.14, the characteristics of an effective teacher are presented. The educators strongly identified the most desirable characteristic (70 per cent) as the ability to empathize with students. This is followed by knowledge of the job area (37 per cent), being broad-minded and flexible (26 per cent) and caring about the job (24 per cent).

Table 4.6.15 presents what the educators consider to be the special and unique characteristics of an effective teacher in northern Alberta. Nineteen per cent felt that there are none; a good teacher is the same regardless of where he or she teaches. Forty-eight per cent felt that, to be effective, the northern teacher must be self-confident, self-reliant and independent. This is followed by accepting of other cultures (35 per cent) and having a commitment to the children (26 per cent).

TABLE 4.6.15

Unique Characteristics of An Effective Northern Teacher:
The Percentage of Educators Who Mentioned Each Characteristic

Characteristic	Percent (n=54)
None, not unique	19
Must relate to community	20
Accept other cultures	35
Cares about students as individuals	9
Self-confident, self-reliant, independent	48
Commitment to the kids	26
Adaptive and flexible	6
Dedication to work and longer hours	6
Can adapt subjects to locale	6

Example: 35 per cent of the educators felt that the effective northern teacher should accept other cultures.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since respondents could provide more than one answer.

Eighty-six per cent of respondents indicated that they did not receive any special training for teaching in the north. The fourteen percent who did specified the following training:

- orientation by the school division;
- course in education foundations;
- inter-cultural education at the University of Alberta;
- a course at the University on Native education;
- thesis relating to northern Alberta; and
- spent time in the north on unrelated work.

Table 4.6.16 presents the educators' views on preparing teachers for teaching in the north. Over one-third (39 per cent) said that they need to be given a realistic orientation to the situation they will face. Related to this, 33 per cent said that teachers could be better prepared by exposure to northern and Native culture and 20 per cent said that local student teaching would help.

TABLE 4.6.16

Better Preparation of Teachers for North:
The Percentage of Educators Who Mentioned Specific Factors

Factors	Percent (n=54)
Realistic orientation to the situation	39
Exposure to northern and Native culture	33
Local student teaching	20
Native counselling and teachers	6
Preparation for dealing with low achievers	9
Better general teacher training	9
Better hiring procedures	7

Example: 39 per cent of the educators felt that a realistic orientation to the situation would prepare teachers better for the north.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since respondents could provide more than one response.

4.6.6 Existing school programs

Administrators in the schools where interviews were conducted were asked questions about their schools and school programs. Their responses are summarized below.

In most cases, the curriculum has received little adaptation to the local culture. A few administrators indicated moderate adaptation in some areas such as social studies, options and arts and crafts.

Only the larger schools offer vocational programs; an industrial arts course is sometimes taught in some of the smaller schools. In most cases these are available only at a senior high level.

Remedial programs that are available consist of the occasional resource room, or transitional programs, and in some cases life skills programs are offered. Some form of these were available in most but not all of the schools.

Career counselling is fairly generally available. Its extent varies tremendously from individual counselling at the student's request to a full course. Many of the schools do not have counsellors on staff but counselling services, if required, are available through central office. This, however, is generally only for extreme cases.

Some of the schools have on-the-job work experience.

Mobile education facilities and mobile teacher specialist teams are virtually unavailable. Field programs exist in all of the schools but their extent varies considerably.

Computer training facilities are becoming fairly widespread in most of the schools. Budgets limit their number and general accessibility.

Extracurricular activities in most of the schools are comprised primarily of sports. Some of the schools also have clubs. The level of programs and participation vary considerably from school to school. In several, the staff devote the time necessary to the organization of a good universal program. In others, programs are not organized or are limited. Where parent involvement in extracurricular activities exists, it is usually only in a supervisory role.

There appear to be few intervention programs for at risk students. One successful program has been developed at Edwin Parr Composite School in Athabasca. Students in this program remain in the classroom setting, but have extensive contact with a student care worker. Parents and concerned school staff are also involved in the program. Details about this sythesized approach are presented in the Issues and Recommendations chapter of the report (Chapter I).

When asked about programs they would implement to reduce dropout rates, educators offered the following responses:

a) Programs less than $25,000.00:

- organize a vocational-work experience room for "at risk" students;
- offer a better counselling program;
- offer more shop equipment and more related courses;
- home program and counselling;
- have a lunch program;
- provide vocational courses;
- better extracurricular program;
- introduce career awareness at elementary level;
- have a home room plan;
- strong life skills program for "at risk" students; and
- Native language orientation.

b) Programs over $25,000.00:

- skills programs with sufficient equipment (e.g. computers);
- better staff training to be more sensitive to students who need help;

- put in a cafeteria;
- smaller classes;
- activity centre for industrial arts shop-well equipped;
- more vocational and business education;
- have a staff member to work in community relations;
- have work experience programs;
- complete vocational education program.

4.6.7 Summary

The views and perspectives of educators interviewed in this study were presented in this section. The 54 educators included teachers, counsellors and administrative staff. Key findings discussed in this section include the following:

- the main factors which educators felt contributed to early school leaving were lack of interest in course work, a poor home life, student's desire to earn money, and poor grades;
- educators felt that parents and the leavers themselves were most responsible for early school leaving;
- most educators felt that potential dropouts could be identified at the grade five to eight level;
- eighty per cent felt that the dropout rate is a significant problem in their school;
- many educators felt that program changes in the schools, improved social services, and a better community attitude to education would help to reduce dropout rates;
- almost three-quarters felt that school size had an impact on dropout rates;
- the majority identified the need for vocational programs in the schools: and most supported the mobile education concept;
- educators felt the teachers should be better prepared for teaching in the north through a realistic orientation, exposure to northern and Native culture, and student teaching in northern settings.

In the following section of this chapter, the views of community group representatives are discussed.

4.7 Community group interviews

4.7.1 The interview sample

Interviews were conducted with community group representatives. The results of these interviews are discussed in this section.

In all communities in the north there are groups, associations, organizations or representatives of government departments which have a definite interest and concern with education. Several of these groups were identified, usually through discussions with school representatives when the survey team was working in the schools. Depending on the time available, a small number of these people were contacted and interviewed in each community. In total, 17 were interviewed. They were selected to represent a variety of groups having involvement with the schools and/or with children of school age.

Representatives from the following groups were interviews:

1. Big Stone Band Education Authority - Desmarais
2. Big Stone Cree Indian Band - Desmarais
3. Desmarais Local School Board - Desmarais
4. Community Counselling Services - Bonnyville
5. Bonnyville District Fine Arts Society - Bonnyville
6. Junior "B" Hockey Organization - Bonnyville
7. Young Squires Organization - Bonnyville
8. Fort Vermilion Community Vocational Centre
9. Family Community Support Services - Fort Vermilion
10. Fort Vermilion School Board - Fort Vermilion
11. Community Vocational Centre - Fox Lake
12. Catholic Youth Organization - Grande Prairie
13. Cadotte Lake Local School Board - Cadotte Lake
14. Metis Association Local - Cadotte Lake
15. Recreation Board - Fort McMurray
16. Tough Love Organization - Fort McMurray
17. Social Services - Fort McMurray

The composite results of these interviews are presented below.

Note: Tables may not total exactly 100 per cent due to rounding of percentage figures.

4.7.2 Early school leaver characteristics

This section deals with the characteristics of the dropout and the factors that contribute to early school leaving.

In Table 4.7.1 the characteristics of the early leaver as perceived by community group members are identified. The highest frequency response is that the family of the leaver does not value education (41 per cent). This is followed by lack of ambition (29 per cent), and low self-esteem (24 per cent). Other characteristics mentioned include poor grades (18 per cent), ethnic minority (18 per cent) and poor home life (18 per cent).

TABLE 4.7.1

Characteristics of the Early Leaver:
The Percentage of Community Group Members
Who Mentioned Each Characteristic

Characteristic	Percent (n=17)
Poor grades	18
Ethnic minority	18
Poor home life	18
Family does not value education	41
Is a discipline problem	12
Poor attendance	12
Is not interested in school	6
Lacks ambition/is a low achiever	29
Has low self-esteem	24

Example: 18 per cent of the community group members thought that early leavers were characterized by poor grades.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since representatives could mention more than one factor.

Table 4.7.2 presents the ratings of the importance of certain factors in contributing to early school leaving. Interviewees were asked to rate each reason as being either very important, important or not important. The responses across each row therefore total 100. Home life (82 per cent) and lack of home encouragement (82 per cent) rated high as very important reasons for leaving school early. This is followed by teaching approaches (65 per cent), the school atmosphere (59 per cent) and poor grades (59 per cent) as very important reasons. The two highest rated reasons in the "not important" category were the distance of the home from the school (71 per cent) and the need for income (41 per cent).

TABLE 4.7.2

Factors Affecting Early Leaving:
The Percentage of Community Representatives Who Rated
Each Factor as Very Important, Somewhat Important or Not Important

Reasons	Very Important (%)	Important (%)	Not Important (%)
Distance, home-school	24	6	71
Need for income	35	24	41
Peer pressure	29	41	29
Not interested	41	59	-
Poor grades	59	35	6
Desire to work	47	41	12
Courses irrelevant	53	29	18
School atmosphere	59	29	12
Home life	82	6	12
School facilities	29	35	35
Teaching approaches	65	29	6
No home encouragement	82	12	6
Social factors (drugs, alcohol)	47	53	-

Example: 24 per cent of the community representatives felt that distance from school was a very important factor; 6 per cent felt it was important, and 71 per cent felt it was not important.

Note: The total percentage across each row is approximately 100 per cent due to rounding of percentage figures.

In Table 4.7.3, those who were considered responsible for students' leaving school early are identified. Forty-four per cent identified parents and 25 per cent identified the leavers themselves as most responsible. Forty per cent indicated that they believe the teachers and administrators are the second most responsible for students' leaving school early.

TABLE 4.7.3

Responsibility for Early School Leaving: The Percentage of Community Group Members Who Mentioned Each Factor

Person	Most Responsible (n=16) (%)	Second Most Responsible (n=16) (%)
Leavers themselves	25	20
Friends	13	20
Parents	44	20
Teachers and administrators	19	40
Community	-	-
Employers	-	-
	100%	100%

4.7.3 Concerns with early leavers

Only one out of 16 who responded to the question thought that the dropout problem was not significant in their jurisdiction. All the others said it was a significant problem. When asked why it is a significant problem they cited the following reasons:

- dropouts do not have enough education to get a good job;
- it has become a family tradition and alcohol plays a large role.

The respondents were asked how important high school completion is in getting a job. Out of 16 who answered, 12 (75 per cent) said they considered it very important, three (19 per cent) said it was somewhat important and one (6 per cent) said high school completion is not important.

4.7.4 Program improvements and mitigative measures

This section looks at the responses to a series of questions that were aimed at obtaining ideas on how the incidence of early school leaving might be reduced. Some of these are general questions, while others involve responses to very specific program areas.

The interviewees were asked what good things were happening in their school system and the features that they liked about the school or school system for their children. Out of the 17 interviewed, seven (41 per cent) indicated they liked the extracurricular activities. This is followed by 35 per cent who liked the administration and 29 per cent who liked the teachers. Other features that were mentioned include the curriculum, community involvement, local school boards, the sports program and the hot lunch program.

They were next asked what would improve their school system and make it more helpful for children. Forty-one per cent said the curriculum should be improved. Other factors that were identified for improvement were the administration (17 per cent), teachers (29 per cent) and counselling (29 per cent). Other factors that were mentioned were extracurricular activities; the need for smaller schools and parent/community involvement. It was also suggested that, in Native communities, there is a need for introducing children into school through English as a Second Language programs. With the current system this does not happen. When this lack is combined with the pass-fail system, students get a discouraging introduction to school rather than meeting with success in the early grades.

One question concerned the impact of the size of the school on dropout rates. Nine out of 16 said it had an impact and the other seven said it did not. Eight of the nine indicated that too large a school was detrimental because the smaller schools encouraged more direct student/teacher contact which made for a better atmosphere for the students. Only one person said a bigger school is better. The reason given was that it provides for more course options and generally better facilities.

Those interviewed were asked if they felt that there were courses not offered at their schools which potential leavers might like to take. Most of those interviewed in smaller centres and the remote areas felt there were. Those from larger centres such as Grande Prairie and Fort McMurray felt that there were not. Table 4.7.4 presents the choices for those who expressed the need for more subjects. The most frequently mentioned need is for vocational education (35 per cent) followed by life skills programs (29 per cent).

TABLE 4.7.4

Desired Areas of Study:
The Percentage of Respondents Who Mentioned Each Area of Study

Area of Study	Percent (n=17)
Vocational education	35
Business education	12
Clerical	6
Life skills	29
Career counselling	12
Local history and culture	12

Example: 35 per cent of the community representatives mentioned the need for vocational education.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since respondents could provide more than one response.

Community representatives were asked what they thought could be done in their community to reduce the dropout rate. The following responses were given:

- three people said more counselling is needed;
- two said the parents and the community have to get tougher;
- two said everybody in the community has to be involved in the education process;
- older, better, more experienced teachers are needed;
- education has to be geared to meet the cultural requirements of the children;
- the curriculum should be diversified to make it more interesting;
- adults in the community have to be made aware of what education is all about;
- two people said that the solution to the problem has to start with teaching parents how to be parents;
- more recreation is needed for the children; and
- more drug control programs are needed.

One of the questions asked if parents, as individuals, were involved with the school in their community. Nine (53 per cent) said they were and eight (47 per cent) said they were not. Most of those who said "yes" qualified it by indicating that there was very little involvement. Most of the involvement focused on parent-teacher association meetings, volunteering services for extra-curricular activities and attending parent-teacher meetings. In general, it was indicated that there is very little parent/community involvement in the schools in the north.

Another question asked how parent involvement with the school would influence children to stay in school and what the nature of this involvement should be. Several said this would influence children positively because of the following:

- four people felt that if parents were involved it would show the students that they cared about them;

- another four said it would demonstrate to the children the importance of education;
- another four said this involvement would influence the children toward caring about school and education;
- three said that parents' involvement would reduce potential problems students might have at school and help resolve existing problems that cause students to drop out or be "pushed out.

The types of parent/community involvement that were suggested are as follows:

- six respondents said that parents should be invited and encouraged to participate more actively in school activities with the students, particularly extracurricular and social activities;
- teachers should invite parents to the school to visit and talk to them on a more regular basis;
- parents could provide homework supervision at the school;
- more PTA associations and meetings should be offered;
- there should be more interviews and contact between the classroom teacher and the parents;
- help should be provided to the parents to learn about the school.

Eight out of 14 who answered felt that smaller schools using unconventional models such as community vocational colleges should influence students to remain in school. The reasons given are as follows:

- this would not be good for all children but it would be an alternative for those who find the academic stream in the current system impossible;
- for children who need it, this model would provide for more personal contact;
- one person who said no, explained that society could not afford to have smaller C.V.C. type schools as an option.

Thirteen of 15 who answered believed that mobile education facilities and mobile teachers (e.g. laboratories and vocational education programs) would have a positive impact on keeping students in school. They explained that they would provide program and course options which are not presently available, particularly in the area of vocational education.

Eight out of 15 said that education by correspondence is not an alternative or a solution to reducing the dropout rates, primarily because the students need very high motivation to succeed. Those who said it might help emphasized that it should be considered a last resort only and could really only work if students were supervised.

The final question in this area dealt with the impacts of boarding out and long bus rides. Everyone who responded said that boarding out does not work. It is "no good" and has "proven itself not to work over and over again". In response to busing over long distances, most felt that it encourages students to quit because it slowly fosters a hatred of school after a number of years. They also stated that it affects mental alertness so that students cannot perform well in school and thus are more likely to experience failure.

In answer to how the boarding and long bus ride situation might be improved, community representatives responded as follows:

- put a K to 12 school in every community. This would require split grades and decentralization of larger composite schools in some areas;
- have C.V.C. programs tied in to the school in centres where the schools do not go to grade 10; and
- rather than having students boarding out, encourage the establishment of mobile education programs.

4.7.5 Teacher characteristics

Tables 4.7.5 and 4.7.6 respectively present community group members' ideas on the characteristics of an effective and ineffective teacher.

TABLE 4.7.5

Characteristics of an Effective Teacher: The Percentage of Respondents Who Mentioned Each Feature

Characteristic	Percent (n=17)
Understands children	41
Is interested in children	53
Is fair	12
Helps children	18
Explains things clearly	24
Cares	59
Has a positive attitude	18

Example: 41 per cent of the respondents said that an effective teacher understands children.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since respondents could give more than one response.

TABLE 4.7.6

Characteristics of an Ineffective Teacher: The Percentage of Respondents Who Mentioned Each Feature

Characteristic	Percent (n=17)
Ignores poor students	5
Does not care	41
Does not talk to children	24
Does not present materials well	47
Just wants to get through material	24

Example: 41 per cent of the respondents said that an ineffective teacher does not care.

Note: The total percentage is greater than 100 since respondents could give more than one response.

The most frequently mentioned attribute of an effective teacher is caring (59 per cent). This is followed closely by the characteristic of being interested in children (53 per cent). The most frequently mentioned characteristic of an ineffective teacher is failure to present materials well (47 per cent). This is followed by not caring (41 per cent). Other comments made in the interviews related to teaching in the north and its more remote areas. It was mentioned that these areas seldom have good teachers because new teachers are not prepared to know or like the place. After two years, when and if they open themselves up, start knowing the place and its children, and start feeling comfortable in the community, they often leave.

4.7.6 Summary

Representatives from 17 northern groups, associations, and organizations were interviewed during the study. Their perspectives on the early school leaver situation are as follows:

- the home life of the leaver, and lack of home encouragement are important factors relating to early school leaving;
- most felt that the dropout problem was significant in their area;
- school improvements should focus on the curriculum, teachers, and better counselling;
- most representatives from smaller centres and remote areas expressed the need for more course options, particularly vocational education and life skills programs;
- the majority supported the mobile education concept, and they felt that busing and boarding does not work.

This is the final section in the presentation of the primary research data. In the following chapter (Chapter V: Analysis and Interpretation) the information from the data component discussed in Chapter IV is integrated and compared.

V ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

5.1 Introduction

In this section, the primary data components presented in Chapter IV are integrated and compared. The main objectives of the discussion are:

- to highlight the characteristics of the early school leaver;
- to compare the leaver with the stayer;
- to indicate the factors which identify high risk students as potential school leavers; and
- to compare the views of students, parents, educators and community group members with regard to the school environment.

Where possible, comparisons are made on the following characteristics:

a) Profile information;
b) School history and performance;
c) Views on schooling;
d) The experience of leaving school;
e) Reasons for leaving; and
f) Perspectives on the school environment.

5.2 Profile characteristics

5.2.1 School leaver profile

The characteristics of the school leaver have been summarized from both the school records of 2,671 students (see Sections 4.1.2 and 4.1.3) and the school leaver interviews (n=126) (see Sections 4.2.3 and 4.2.4).

School records indicated that most leavers (77 per cent) left school between the ages of 16 and 19 years and leaving occurred at the highest rates in grades 9 and 10. Those leaving before the age of 16 years were more likely to be from remote/isolated or rural locations. Comparisons of ages with grade levels at the time of termination suggest that school leavers may be several years behind in their schooling before dropping out. For example, approximately two-thirds of students leaving school before grade 8 were 15 to 17 years of age compared with an expected age of 13 or 14 for grade 8 students.

It was not possible to determine from the records the exact proportion of leavers who had been retained in school. However, of the retentions reported, 84 per cent had been retained one or two years, and 16 per cent had been retained for three or more years.

Ethnicity appeared to be a factor related to grade of termination and retention. The age of termination did not differ significantly for Native and Caucasian students. However, a greater proportion of Native students was retained for three or four years. As a result, Native students tended to complete fewer grades prior to leaving school. About one-half left before grade 9, compared with one-fifth of the Caucasian students.

Corresponding with this picture, students leaving earlier were also more likely to be from remote/isolated or rural locations.

The school leavers could be characterized by a number of socio-demographic features. The proportions of male and female leavers appeared to be fairly comparable. However when ethnicity was considered, it was found that Native school leavers were somewhat more likely to be female than male, while the opposite was true for Caucasian leavers.

Several characteristics of leavers were identified from the school leaver and parent interviews. These were as follows:

- the majority of leavers spoke English at home, with Cree and other languages each spoken by approximately one-fifth of families;
- about two-thirds lived in two-parent households;
- many had parents with limited schooling (i.e. less than high school);
- most leavers had other family members or friends who had left school. In families with leavers, about one-half of the first and second born left school early, while the rate of leaving in subsequent children was notably higher. One-third of leavers indicated that most of their friends had left;
- almost one-third had had problems with the law.

5.2.2 Comparison of early school leavers with school stayers and high risk students

To provide further clarification of the characteristics of school leavers, comparisons were made between the social backgrounds of the leavers and the stayers (reported in Sections 4.2.4 and 4.3.3 respectively). Key points include the following:

- the language distribution of the early school leavers and the stayers was similar, with the proportions speaking English, Cree and other languages being comparable;
- fewer early school leavers lived in two-parent households compared to the stayers (65 per cent compared to 80 per cent of the stayers);
- parents of early school leavers tended to have less formal education than parents of the stayers;
- there was a stronger family history of school leaving among the school leavers; 72 per cent reported that at least one other member was a dropout, as compared to 46 per cent of the school stayers; and
- most leavers (87 per cent) had friends who had left school, compared to two-thirds of the stayers.

The high risk students who were selected as potential school leavers were also compared with both the leavers and the stayers. The objective of this comparison was to identify features which would help educators to distinguish potential school leavers from those who were likely to stay in school.

The social background of the student appears to provide some relevant indicators for identifying high risk students. (see Section 4.4.3). High risk students appear to be quite comparable to school leavers in terms of their household structure, their family tradition of school leaving and in having a high number of friends who have left school.

5.3 School history and performance

5.3.1 The early school leaver

School history and performance characteristics have been summarized from school records (see Section 4.1.4) and interviews with early school leavers (section 4.2.5). Early school leavers appear to have a fairly mobile school history, with many attending school in more than one centre. Most (71 per cent) of those interviewed had also taken the bus at some time during their schooling.

According to school records, leavers tended to have poor school attendance, and almost three-quarters were reported to be a disciplinary problem. Discipline problems among leavers were more likely to occur in urban centres than in rural areas. The incidence did not differ for Native and Caucasian students.

The school performance records indicated that a large number of school leavers were at a failing level during their last year of school; over one-half of the students scored below 50 per cent in language, reading, and math.

Consistent with this picture, the school leavers who were interviewed did not view their school performance very positively; few considered that they had done well in school.

Intelligence test scores tended to be somewhat lower than average. Almost two-thirds of the leavers whose I.Q. scores were recorded in the school records had test scores lower than 100, compared to a normal population proportion of 50 per cent.

School records indicated that about one-quarter of the leavers participated in extracurricular activities while they were in school. This figure was somewhat higher (52 per cent) for the stayers who were interviewed.

Many students who were interviewed did not feel very positively about their relationship with teachers. This was substantiated in the interviews with leavers' parents. The parents attributed this to problems with student and educator characteristics which blocked effective communication.

5.3.2 Comparison of leavers with school stayers and high risk students

Data from early school leaver interviews (section 4.2.5) and stayer interviews (section 4.3.4) were examined.

The early school leaver and the stayer were compared on several factors related to mobility, boarding and busing. Early school leavers appeared to have a more mobile history during their school years than the stayers. Seventy per cent of the leavers had attended school in more than one centre, compared to only 48 per cent of the stayers. Slightly more leavers had taken the bus at one time or another during their school years (71 per cent) compared to 63 per cent of the stayers.

The school leaver appeared to feel less positive about his school performance than did the school stayer. Only 19 per cent of the school leavers felt they were doing well, while approximately one-half of the stayers expressed that feeling. The proportions of leavers who felt that they were average (61 per cent) or poor (20 per cent) was higher than the proportion for the stayers (45 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively).

Scholastic differences between the two groups were borne out in the actual grades reported for the best and worst subjects. One-half of the leavers reported their best grades to be about 80 per cent, while approximately three-quarters (72 per cent) of the stayers reported grades in this range. Differences were even more striking with respect to the worst grades reported by the two groups. Almost three-quarters of the leavers (73 per cent) had failing grades (under 50), while only 30 per cent of the stayers reported grades below 50 per cent.

School leavers and stayers were asked how they felt the school staff perceived them. Fewer leavers felt that the staff would consider them to be hard workers, co-operative, or that they did well in their courses. More leavers (30 per cent) than stayers (5 per cent) felt that they would be considered a discipline problem by their principal. Forty-three per cent of the leavers who were interviewed indicated that they missed a great deal of school (more than two days a month); this proportion was considerably higher than the 5 per cent of stayers reporting this rate of attendance. This picture is consistent with previous reports of a history of poor attendance among early school leavers.

The students were asked to comment on their treatment at school. Most stayers felt that they were treated fairly, while almost one-half of the leavers felt that they had been "picked on". It is interesting to note that approximately three-quarters of the leavers who felt picked on identified other students as the most common problem; this was followed by teachers, identified by 64 per cent of the leavers.

Both groups reported a similar proportion of friends at school. However, school leavers had a stronger perception of poor relations with others, including teachers, parents, and other students, compared to the stayers.

Fewer leavers participated in extracurricular activities while they were in school (52 per cent compared to 64 per cent of the stayers).

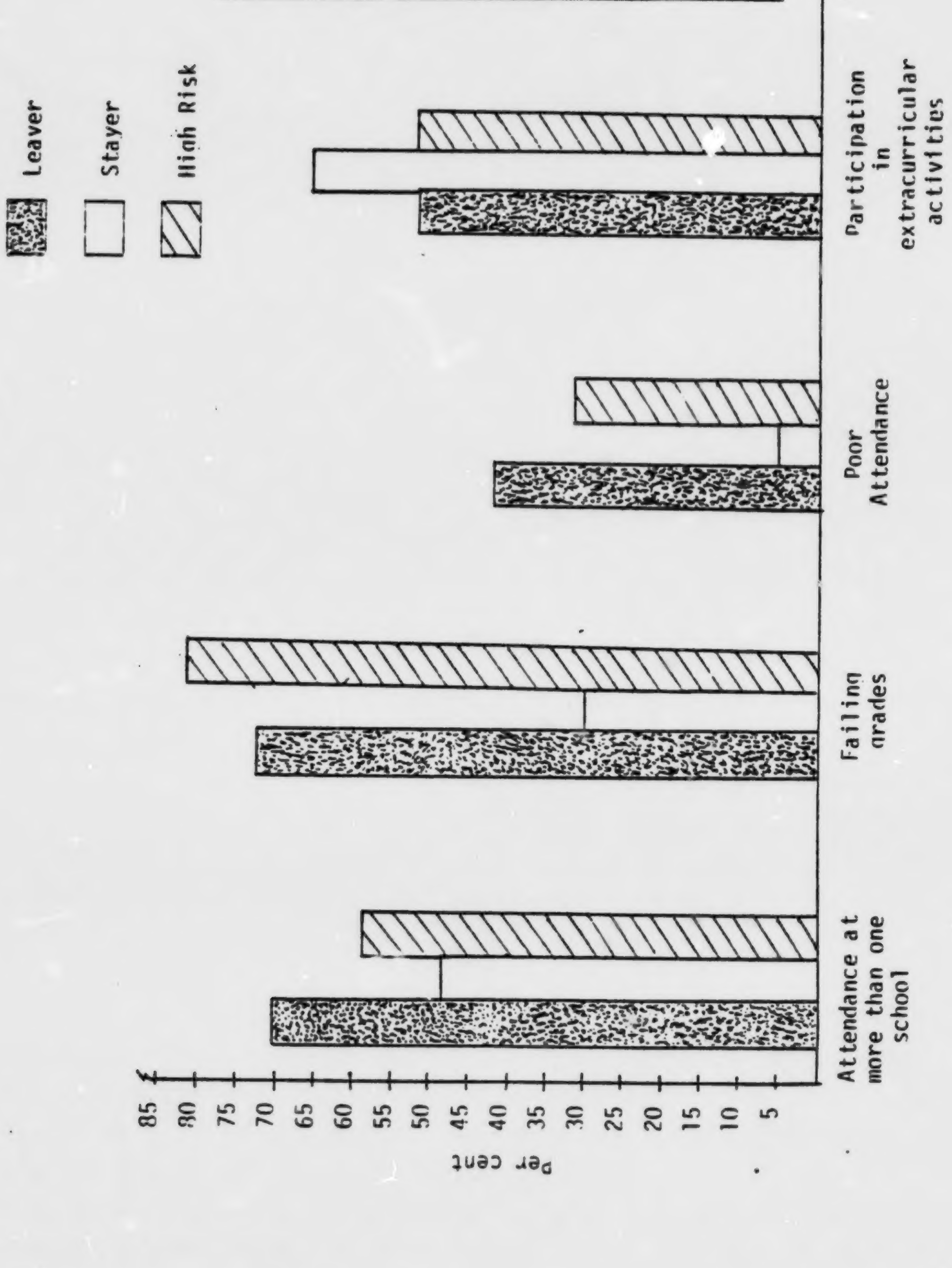
In summary, many differences were identified when the school history and performance of the school leaver was compared to that of the school stayer. Leavers appeared to have a more mobile school history, and a poorer rate of attendance; more felt picked on in school, particularly by other students. The scholastic record of leavers was poorer, and they expressed more negative perceptions about their school performance and their relationships with other people than did the school stayer.

The school history and performance of the high risk students (see section 4.4.4) were also compared with those of both the early school leaver and the stayer.

The high risk students resembled the early school leavers most strongly in the area of school grades, and in their perceptions of their school performance. Most high risk students, like early school leavers, did not feel very positively about their school performance. High risk students were also similar to leavers with regard to actual grades. Seventy-three per cent of the leavers had their worst marks under 50 per cent, as did 81 per cent of the high risk students. This compares with 30 per cent of the stayers.

FIGURE 5.3.1

School History and Performance: Comparisons of Early School Leavers With School Stayers and High Risk Students



High risk students also tended to show a picture of discipline problems and poor attendance which was similar to that of the school leaver. Fewer than one-half of the high risk students indicated that they had good relationships with other students. This proportion was lower than the proportion of both the leavers and the stayers.

For the remaining characteristics, the high risk student could be located on a continuum between the school leaver and the school stayer. This suggests that the high risk students were demonstrating some of the same patterns as the school leavers, but not quite as strongly or consistently.

5.4 Views about schooling

5.4.1 The early school leaver

The leavers were asked to indicate their views about their school experiences (see section 4.2.6).

The favourite subjects of the interviewed leavers were math and physical education, while English and science were the most frequently mentioned dislikes of the leavers.

The main reasons that the leavers liked their favourite subjects were that they did well in them, or that they found them interesting. The most commonly mentioned reason for disliking courses was that they were too hard or that the student obtained poor grades.

About three-quarters felt that discipline was fair in their school.

When asked about things they liked at school, 60 per cent of the leavers mentioned the presence of friends, while sports was indicated by 44 per cent.

With regard to dislikes, teachers were most frequently mentioned by the leavers.

5.4.2 Comparison of leavers with stayers and high risk students

The views and experiences of the school leaver were compared with those of the school stayer (see section 4.3.5).

When students were asked to indicate the reasons that they liked their favourite courses, there was an interesting contrast in the responses of the leavers and stayers. The reasons most frequently mentioned by leavers were that they did well (56 per cent), and found the course interesting (54 per cent). For stayers, the fact that the course was interesting appeared to be the strongest reason (mentioned by 80 per cent), and doing well was cited by a smaller proportion of students (36 per cent). The school stayers thus appeared to be much more motivated by a positive interest in their courses, compared to the early school leaver.

Differences were also noted between the two groups with regard to other general school likes and dislikes. The presence of friends at the school was by far the most frequently mentioned feature noted by early school leavers (60 per cent). Sports were ranked second by this group. The picture was quite different for school stayers. Only 27 per cent of the stayers cited the presence of friends as a positive feature of school. This ranked fourth behind sports (34 per cent), extracurricular activities (31 per cent), and teachers (28 per cent).

With regard to dislikes, teachers ranked highest for the leaver (37 per cent) while discipline was most frequently mentioned by the stayers (53 per cent).

The responses of high risk students (see section 4.4.5) were also compared with the responses of leavers and stayers. High risk students appeared to be quite similar to school leavers in terms of their school likes and dislikes. They liked their favourite course because they were doing well (56 per cent), or the subject was interesting (46 per cent). Friends (60 per cent) and sports (42 per cent) were particularly important features of school; the most frequently mentioned dislike was the teachers (30 per cent), followed by discipline (20 per cent).

The attraction of friends to both leavers and high risk students is in strong contrast to their importance for stayers. This finding appears to be particularly significant in view of the fact that the majority of leavers and high risk students have friends who are early school leavers. As friends leave school, one of the main attractions of school may be reduced for these students, and may contribute to their decision to leave school.

5.5 The school leaving experience

5.5.1 The early school leaver

Most early school leavers first thought about leaving school in grade 9 or grade 10 (see section 4.2.7). Since a large proportion of students left after these grades, it is evident that there is not a great deal of early consideration about leaving school.

For most students, leaving school was their own idea. At least three-quarters of the leavers did not feel comfortable approaching school staff to discuss their leaving school. Of those who did talk to counsellors, teachers, or administrators, almost one-half felt that the staff did not understand their position; counsellors and teachers were likely to encourage students to stay in school. More students consulted with parents or friends, and found them to be understanding.

Parents of leavers were contacted by the school in less than one-half of the cases. Two-thirds of the parents reported that to the best of their knowledge, no one at school attempted to help their child remain in school.

When they left school, almost one-half of the students did not have any alternative plans. Most of those who knew what they were going to do indicated that they were going to work, or would look for work. About 40 per cent had a job when they left school, corresponding closely with the percentage who had had a part-time job while in school. At the time they left school, one-half did not consider completing high school to be important for getting a job.

Over one-half of the leavers indicated that something could have been done to keep them in school. Several school-related factors were offered as suggestions. The most frequently mentioned responses were better counselling and teachers, and better courses as well as a broader choice of courses.

Parents of leavers who felt something could have be done suggested more relevant courses, better teacher/student communications, better parent/ administration communication, and more parental involvement and encouragement.

About 60 per cent of leavers indicated they really wanted to leave when they did, and felt that dropping out was the best thing they could have done at the time. This suggests that almost one-half of students had some hesitancy about leaving.

Since leaving school, about two-thirds had had full-time jobs, and 13 per cent had part-time jobs. Most people enjoyed their last job, and about 60 per cent said they liked their job better than school. Different reasons were offered, including making money, independence, and that it was more interesting than school.

About one-half had continued their education since leaving school, with a high number taking vocational training.

5.5.2 Comparison of leavers with school stayers and high risk students

Three-quarters of the school stayers had never considered leaving school before grade 12 (see section 4.3.6). Of the 23 per cent who had considered leaving, approximately one-half had talked with parents and friends, while fewer had consulted with school staff. This pattern is similar to that for the early school leavers, who did not feel comfortable approaching school staff. This finding suggests that this feeling is fairly general among students and is a concern which should be addressed.

The majority of stayers (95 per cent) felt that school completion was very important to getting a job. Notably fewer school leavers (50 per cent) agreed with this at the time they left school.

In contrast to the stayer, 90 per cent of the high risk students (see section 4.4.6) had considered leaving school before grade 12 graduation, with most having thought about leaving in the previous six months. Students who had considered leaving school but then decided to remain most frequently cited the following reasons for staying in school: that schooling is essential to obtaining a good job; or that they wanted to graduate. As with leavers and stayers, few high risk students had talked with school staff, but approximately one-third had discussed the possibility of leaving school with their friends or parents.

5.6 Reasons for leaving school

There was overall agreement among educators, school leavers, and school records that lack of interest was the commonly reported reason for leaving school (see Table 5.6.1). Work was also mentioned frequently in the school records, by educators and high risk students. However, work ranked fifth as a reason given by school leavers.

School leavers felt that problems with teachers and administrators were just as important as lack of interest in contributing to school leaving. Educators who were interviewed did acknowledge that "problems with teachers" was a reason for early school leaving, but considered that it ranked behind lack of interest, and work. There was little mention of these problems in the approximately 2,700 school records which were examined.

Other factors felt to contribute to early school leaving included personal and family problems, poor grades, and peer pressure.

TABLE 5.6.1

Reasons For Leaving: Comparison of School Records, and the Views of Leavers, Educators, and High Risk Students

Reason Given for Leaving	School Records[1] (%)	Leaver Interviews[2] (%)	Educators[3] (%)	High Risk[4] (%)
No interest/bored	22	31	48	38
Work	16	18	44	21
Just quit	11	X	X	X
Personal/family	9	22	X	17
Problems with teachers/ administrators	X	32	31	21
Poor grades/would have failed	7	20	43	14
Peer pressure	X	14	X	12

X = not recorded.

Example: 22 per cent of the school records mentioned "no interest" as a reason for leaving school, compared to 31 per cent of the leavers, 48 per cent of the educators, and 38 per cent of the high risk students.

1. From Table 4.1.6.
2. From Table 4.2.12.
3. This column corresponds to Table 4.6.5 and indicates the views of educators about reasons for early school leaving.
4. Corresponds to Table 4.4.11 and indicates reasons why high risk students considered leaving school.

School records indicate that, over the past few years (1980 to 1983), "no interest" has become increasingly important as a reason for leaving, while work has declined in importance. This pattern corresponds with the economic situation in Alberta during this period.

Different reasons for leaving school were more likely to be important to students with certain characteristics. These are summarized as follows:

- "work" was more likely to be mentioned by males, Caucasians, high school students and those in small urban centres;
- "no interest" and "would have failed" were likely to be mentioned by males, Native students, those from rural areas, and students leaving

before the junior high school level;

- "peer pressure" was more likely to be mentioned by Caucasian students, and those leaving at a junior high level; and
- "personal/family problems" were more likely to be mentioned by females.

Each of the groups interviewed was also asked to rate the importance of thirteen factors as reasons for early school leaving. The percentage of respondents who rated each reason as very important is indicated in Table 5.6.2.

TABLE 5.6.2

Very Important Reasons:
The Percentage of Interviewees Who Rated Each Factor
To Be Very Important

Reasons	Early School Leaver[1]	Stayer[2]	High Risk[3]	Parents[4]	Community Members[5]
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Distance, home-school	16	4	22	15	24
Need for income	37	45	32	29	35
Peer pressure	33	21	24	41	29
Not interested	55	43	34	56	41
Poor grades	48	36	42	50	59
Desire to work	43	25	36	35	47
Courses irrelevant	39	34	30	47	53
School atmosphere	55	38	34	65	59
Home life	58	59	50	71	82
School facilities	30	9	14	24	29
Teaching approaches	59	55	40	68	65
No home encouragement	55	57	36	73	82
Social factors (drugs, etc.)	58	57	56	65	47

[1] From Table 4.2.18

[2] From Table 4.3.9

[3] From Table 4.4.14

[4] From Table 4.5.9

[5] From Table 4.7.2

Over one-half of the early school leavers rated both in-school and family/social factors to be very important reasons for early school leaving. In-school factors included teaching approaches, and the school atmosphere; social factors included the home life, lack of home encouragement and factors such as drugs and pregnancy. Lack of interest was also identified.

Most of these factors were also considered to be very important by school stayers, parents, and community members. This indicates fairly consistent agreement about the perceived contribution these specific in-school and social factors have to early school leaving. It is interesting to note that these three groups focused particularly on problems with home life, lack of home encouragement, and teaching approaches.

5.7 Perspectives on school leaving

Perspectives on school leaving were obtained from all groups interviewed. Most educators and community group members felt that school leaving is a significant problem in their area. The majority of educators indicated that their school had no procedures to follow when a student was identified as a potential dropout. The extent of career counselling is highly variable.

The educators were asked to identify what they perceived to be characteristic of the leavers. The most frequently mentioned characteristics were:

- family does not value education;
- poor grades;
- not interested in school;
- lacks ambition/is a low achiever;
- poor home life; and
- discipline problems.

Community members also expressed that leavers' families do not value education or that the students lack ambition or are low achievers. Several also recognized that the early leaver has low self-esteem.

Most of the educators felt that there were differences between male and female leavers. They felt that males left early for jobs, while females left due to pregnancy and marriage. The educators felt that females did not value education as much as males, and generally left school at an earlier age.

The majority of educators felt that they could identify potential leavers at the grades 5 to 8 levels. The most critical factors for recognizing these high risk students were considered to be poor attendance, lack of interest, low grades, and discipline problems. These characteristics correspond well with the documented characteristics of early school leavers outlined in previous sections of this report (see sections 4.1 and 4.2).

Both parents and educators felt that the size of the school has an impact on dropout rates, although community members were divided on this issue. It was felt that large schools were too impersonal and contributed to student alienation. More program options was perceived as a positive feature of larger schools.

All of the interview groups (students, parents, teachers, and community groups) were asked about the primary responsibility associated with early school leaving. The results of the comparison are presented in Table 5.1.7. All of the student groups (leavers, stayers, and high risk) considered the leavers themselves to be primarily responsible; followed by the teachers and administrators. Parents also located the responsibility primarily with the leaver, but over one-quarter of the parents also mentioned educators, friends, themselves, and potential employers. In contrast, educators and community group members placed the responsibility with the parents, and then secondarily with the leavers themselves. Few educators mentioned the contribution of teachers and administrators to early school leaving.

TABLE 5.7.1

Responsibility For Early School Leaving: The Percentage of Interviewees Who Mentioned Specific People As Being Most Responsible

Most Responsible for School Leaving			Interview Group			
	Leavers[1] (%)	Stayers[2] (%)	High Risk[3] (%)	Parents[4] (%)	Educators[5] (%)	Community Members[6] (%)
Leavers themselves	48	59	54	52	23	25
Teachers/Administrators	22	16	24	29	6	19
Friends	17	5	X	32	17	13
Parents	8	13	18	26	31	44
Potential employers	3	2	X	30	6	X
Community	2	5	4	9	14	X

[1] From Table 4.2.14

[2] From Table 4.3.10

[3] From Table 4.4.15

[4] From Table 4.5.8

[5] From Table 4.6.7

[6] From Table 4.7.3

5.8 School programs and mitigative measures

Each of the groups interviewed was asked to indicate what could be done to keep students in school.

The most frequently mentioned responses of the early school leavers were all in-school factors. These were:

- better course work;
- better teachers and teacher/student relations;
- better programs and work experience;
- better career counselling; and
- more interesting school activities.

School stayers and high risk students mentioned the following most frequently:

- more relevant courses;
- better teachers; and
- more extracurricular activities.

Parents of school leavers offered the following suggestions to keep leavers in school:

- more relevant courses;
- better teacher/student communication;
- better parent/administration communication; and
- more parental involvement and encouragement.

Educators felt that the following factors would be effective in reducing the dropout rate:

At the school level:

- more vocational programs;
- alternate programs, such as life skills;
- counselling; and
- more flexibility to meet individual and local needs.

Outside the school:

- better social service and volunteer groups; and
- change in community attitude to education.

Community group members suggested the following measures:

- more counselling;
- parents and community need to get tougher;
- education program has to be adapted and diversified to meet cultural/ children's needs;
- more community involvement and adult awareness of education;

- more experienced teachers;
- more recreation and drug control programs; and
- need for introducing children into school with English as a Second Language courses.

The interviewees were also asked to indicate what additional courses should be offered by the schools. Vocational education was the course which was most frequently mentioned by all the student groups, as well as by parents, educators and community group members.

Leavers, parents and teachers also mentioned computer skills and business education. Life skill courses were mentioned frequently by educators and community group members but these were rarely mentioned by the students or leavers.

The majority of educators and parents supported the community vocational centre (C.V.C.) model, and mobile education facilities. Community group members appeared to favour the mobile facilities approach. These groups felt that correspondence courses would not be an effective solution, and they expressed considerable concern about students boarding out, or taking long bus rides. Alternatives which were suggested included K-9 or K-12 schools in all communities and group homes run by Natives. Community group members also suggested mobile education programs tied into the schools where schools end at grade 10.

Parent and community involvement with the school was strongly supported by the parents interviewed in the study. Community group members indicated that, in general, there was very little parent/community involvement in the north. When asked how they and the community could become more involved, parents and community members indicated the following methods:

- attending PTA meetings;
- parent/teacher contacts on a regular basis;

- parent volunteers and parent aides such as homework supervisor; and
- parent involvement in school activities such as extracurricular activities and social occasions.

The majority of educators also felt that parent-community involvement with the school would have a positive effect on dropout rates by providing a better understanding of the school function and emphasizing the value of education. Community members cited additional positive effects, including resolving problems as they arose, and demonstrating to the students that parents cared about them.

The student groups (leavers, stayers, high risk) and the parents offered a consistent picture of the characteristics of the effective teacher. The most frequently mentioned characteristics were:

- being easy-going and humourous;
- explaining things clearly; and
- understanding/listening to children.

Members of community groups also mentioned the empathetic characteristics of caring, understanding, and having an interest in children.

Educators were also asked to indicate the characteristics of effective and ineffective teachers. Effective teachers were described as:

- empathizing with students;
- knowing their job area;
- being broad-minded and flexible;
- caring about the job;
- patient; and
- well-organized.

It is evident from this analysis that the perspective of the students and parents regarding the characteristics of an effective teacher differs somewhat from that of the educators themselves.

Parents and community group members felt that the ineffective teacher "does not care", is "boring", or "does not present materials well", while school leavers mentioned "not caring", "being poorly prepared", or "bad tempered", with equal frequency.

Parents, community group members and school leavers all felt that ineffective teachers "did not care", were "boring, poorly prepared", or "did not present materials well".

Ineffective teachers were described by educators as:

- not being concerned about children;
- having no compassion; and
- not being organized.

Overall, there was greater agreement among the interviewed groups about the characteristics of the ineffective teacher than for the effective teacher qualities. Community group members expressed that they seldom have good teachers, because they usually leave just when they have begun to know the community.

Special or unique characteristics required of northern teacher which were mentioned frequently by the educators included the following:

- self-confidence, self-reliance, and independence;
- accepting of other cultures;
- having a commitment to the children; and
- relating well to the community.

The majority of educators interviewed did not receive any special training for teaching in the north. The educators offered several suggestions to better prepare teachers for teaching in that context. The most frequently mentioned methods were to provide a realistic orientation to the situation the teachers will face, and to provide a better exposure to northern and Native culture.

The current state of existing programs in the northern schools was summarized by the administrators:

- There is little adaptation of curriculum to local culture;
- Most vocational programs are offered in larger schools and at the senior high level;
- Some form of remedial programs and counselling are available in most schools. In many cases counselling services are available through central office;
- Some schools have life skills or work experience programs, and computer training facilities are becoming widespread;
- Mobile education facilities and teacher specialist teams are generally unavailable. Field programs exist, but their extent varies from school to school; and
- Extracurricular activities are comprised primarily of sports, and the level of programs and participation vary from school to school.

5.9 Summary

In this chapter, an overview of the information obtained from school records, and interviews with leavers, students, parents, educators, and community group representatives has been presented. The picture of the school leaver has been developed from these sources, and various perspectives on early school leaving have been outlined. In the discussion, patterns of consistency in the data have been described.

On the basis of these findings, major issues were identified and recommended mitigative measures were developed. These measures were then reviewed at a series of workshops (Workshop II). The finalized presentation of issues and mitigative measures appears in Chapter I of this report.

Appendix A:

Data Collection Instruments

A.1 General Information Request

A.2 School Leavers Interviews

A.3 School Stayers and High Risk Students

A.4 Parents of Leavers

A.5 Teachers, Counsellors, Administrators

A.6 Community Organizations and Agencies

Appendix A.1 General Information Request

DRAFT SCHOOL LEAVER STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE
(CONFIDENTIAL FOR RESEARCH ONLY

1. Date of birth____________________

2. Male______________Female_____________

3. Occupation:

   Mother_______________Father_________________Guardian______________

4. Ethnicity: Native______Caucasian_______Metis_______Other___________

5. Achievement: Reading T / G Math T / G Composite T / G

   __ __ __ __ __ __

6. Intelligence Test__________Results_________Grade_________

7. Grades: Language_______Reading___________Math___________

8. Vocational Program: Yes__________No__________(circle)

9. Last full grade completed_____________date_____________

10. Attendance____________ Days absent___________

11. Participation in school activities, sports, clubs, etc.

    Yes__________No__________(circle)

12. Academic awards: Yes_________No_________(circle)

13. Disciplinary: Yes_________ No__________(circle)

14. Years retained__________

15. Reason for leaving school____

    ____

16. Date of school termination____________________

17. Additional comments____

    ____

    ____

GENERAL INFORMATION REQUEST FROM ALL SCHOOLS WITH AT LEAST A GRADE 7 LEVEL AND UP TO GRADE 12

---

1. Complete one early school leaver form for each early school leaver. For purposes of this study a school leaver is defined as a student who leaves school prior to completing his Grade 12. This excludes students who transfer to other schools and those who are learning disabled. Include all school leavers for the last three school years.

2. Enrollment by age, sex and grade at the February enrollment count for the last three school years;

   1982-83, 1981-82, 1980-81.

3. (a) Number of staff at the end of the 1982-83 school year.

   (b) Number of classrooms by grade level at the end of the 1982-83 school year.

4. Number of credits taught in each area
   - Academic
   - Diploma
   - Vocational

5. Types and description of special remedial programs offered.

6. Other special programs

   e.g. work experience

   gifted

   life skills

7. Programs or courses offering native and local content.

8. High technology programs and courses

   e.g. computers

9. Type and description of extra-curricular programs

10. Proportion of students bussed in

    % of total enrollment ________

    estimated average bussing time ________

    estimated maximum bussing time ________

11. Type and extent of counselling services available in the school:

Guidance ________
Individual Counselling ________
Group Counselling ________
Vocational Counselling ________
Academic Counselling ________

At Risk Counselling ________
Preventative ________
Counselling During Leaving ________
Job Counselling ________

12. Description of approach vis-a-vis early school leavers, programs and philosophy or actions.

13. In general do you feel the information you provided on school leavers is accurate and comes from good records? Do you feel you may have missed many of the leavers? Describe the problems you had in providing the information on school leavers and identify them.

APPENDIX A.2

QUESTIONNAIRE

EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS

Introduce yourself.

I am working on a job for the Alberta government. We are studying why some students leave school early; that is, why students leave school before graduating with a diploma. The purpose of the study is to recommend practical measures to reduce the number of early school leavers.

We wanted to meet with you and get your ideas on this problem. By participating in this study you'll be helping present and future students at your old school.

I am now going to ask you some questions concerning your time in school and what you have been doing since then. There are no right or wrong answers; we just want to find out your ideas and opinions. If you don't understand a questions or want it repeated, I will gladly do that.

I want you to know that all your answers will be kept confidential. Your answers won't be shown to anyone in the school or government. All students' answers will be summarized into a report and then destroyed. Are you ready?

I.D. NO.______________________

INTERVIEWER__________________________

SCHOOL NAME__________________________

PART I: SCHOOL LEAVING

First I'm going to ask you some questions about leaving school.

1.a) What grade were you in when you first thought about leaving school?

____

b) How old were you then? ___________

2.a) What grade were you in (last grade completed) when you actually left school? _____________

3. Could you tell me the reasons you had for leaving school? (Don't read) (Check first four)

________ poor grades

________ wanted vocational education

________ family problems/no home encouragement

________ in trouble out of school

________ peer pressure

________ wanted to earn money

________ problems with teachers and administrators

________ emotional problems

________ school too far (long bus ride)

________ not interested in course work (hates school)

________ have to board out (leave home/no school)

Others (specify) ____

____

____

4. Was leaving school your own idea? Yes ______ No ________

(If no) Whose idea was it? ________________________________

5. Do you think dropping out was the best thing you could have done at that time?

Yes _______ No ________

(If yes) In what way?
(If no) Why not?

____

____

____

6. Did you really want to leave school?

Yes ________ No _________

7. Lets say you were back in school now: Would you still......

Want to leave ____________, or stay ______________

(If stay) Why? ____

____

____

8. Did you talk to any of the following people about leaving school?
(Probe: understand is the same as empathize)

i) Counsellor: Yes ________ No _________

(If yes) Did he(she) understand? Yes _________ No __________

Did he(she) encourage you to stay? Yes ________ No ________

ii) Your teachers: Yes ________ No __________

(If yes) Did he(she) understand? Yes ________ No _________

Did he(she) encourage you to stay? Yes ________ No ________

iii) Principal or vice-principal Yes ________ No _________

(If yes) Did he(she) understand? Yes ______ No ________

Did he(she) encourage you to stay? Yes _______ No ________

iv) Your parents: Yes ______ No _______

(If yes) Did he(she) understand? Yes ______ No _______

Did he(she) encourage you to stay? Yes _____ No _______

v) Your friends: Yes _______ No _______

(If yes) Did he (she) understand? Yes ______ No _______

Did he (she) encourage you to stay? Yes ____ No _______

vi) Other: Yes _____ No ______ Specify _______________________

(If yes) Did he(she) understand? Yes ______ No _______

Did he(she) encourage you to stay? Yes _____ No _______

9. Have any of your friends left school? Yes ______ No _______

(If yes) Most of them ________

Half of them ________

A few of them _______

·10. When you left school did you know what you were going to do instead of going to school?

Yes _______ No _______

(If yes) What were you going to do? (Don't read, check up to two)

nothing _________

look for work _________

work _________

help at home _________

stay at home _________

leave home _________

travel _________

Other (specify) ____

____

____

11. Is there anything that could have been done to persuade you to stay in school? (Don't read, check first three)

Yes _______ No _______

_______ more relevant course work

_______ better teachers

_______ smaller classes

_______ school closer to home

_______ more extra-curricular activities

_______ better counselling at the school (to encourage staying)

_______ better career counselling (value of education)

_______ better home life

_______ parents more forceful and encouraging

_______ Other (specify) ____________________________________

____

____

12. When you left, how important did you think completing high school was in getting a job?

Very important _______

Somewhat important _______

Not important _______

13. Do you feel the same way now? Yes _______ No _______

(If no) How do you feel now?

Very important _______

Somewhat important _______

Not important _______

14. When you dropped out did you intend to go back to school some day?

Yes _______ No _______ Don't Know _______

15. In your opinion, who do you think is most responsible for students dropping out of school?
(Read all responses - rate the top 2 as 1 & 2)

the school leavers themselves ________

their friends ________

parents ________

teachers ________

administrators ________

the community ________

potential employers ________

Others (specify) ____

____

____

16. Please rate how important the following factors are to students leaving school. Tell me if you think they are very important, somewhat important or not important.

	VI	SI	NI
distance of school from home	____	____	____
need for income	____	____	____
peer pressure	____	____	____
not interested	____	____	____
poor grades	____	____	____
desire to start work	____	____	____
the course work is not relevant to job needs	____	____	____
the school atmosphere	____	____	____
student's home life	____	____	____

	VI	SI	NI
school facilities	____	____	____
teaching approaches	____	____	____
lack of parent encouragement	____	____	____
social factors like alcohol and drug use, pregnancy	____	____	____
Others (specify) ________________	____	____	____
________________	____	____	____
________________	____	____	____

17. In your opinion, what should be done to keep students in school? (Don't read, check first three)

________ schools closer to home

________ better counselling on awareness and value of education

________ better course work

________ better school counselling (to keep students in)

________ additional other programs in school

________ better teachers

________ more parent and community involvement in schools

________ more interesting schools

Others (specify) ____

____

____

PART II - AFTER LEAVING SCHOOL

The next series of questions concern what you have been doing since you left school.

18. How long have you been out of school? ________ (months)

19. In that time how many months did you work? ________

20.a) Did you have a job when you left school?

Yes ________ No ________

b) How many different jobs did you have?

How many full-time? __________

How many part-time? __________

21.a) Were most of these jobs local or away from home?

Local __________

Away from home __________

Both 50/50 __________

b) Did you have a part-time job while going to school?

Yes ________ No ________

22. Did (do) you like your last or present job?

Yes ________ No ________ Don't know _________

23. Did (do) you like that job more than school?

Yes ________ No ________ Don't know _________

Why? _YES_ (Check up to two) _NO_ (Check up to two)

________ no studying
________ no pressure from teachers
________ made money
________ easier than school
________ could be with friends
________ felt independent

Other (specify)

____
____
____

________ harder than school
________ had to leave home
________ couldn't be with friends
________ missed learning
________ felt pressure

Other (specify)

____
____
____

24. Have you taken any courses since you left school?
(Probe: correspondence courses, apprenticeship program)

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) What have you taken?

________ vocational

________ correspondence

________ apprenticeship

________ on-the-job training programs

Other (specify)

____

____

____

25. Do you expect to get more education in the next five years?
(List specifics such as AVC and CVC)

Yes _______ No ________

(If yes) What kind? (Check up to two)

________ university

________ return to grade school

________ correspondence

________ vocational

________ apprenticeship

________ on-the-job training program

Other (specify) ____

____

____

PART III: INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL

Now it's time to talk about school.

26.a) Please tell me the location of each of the schools you attended. What grades did you attend at this school?

Were you living at home or did you board away from home?

How did you travel to this school and how long did it take you to travel one-way?

School Location (Not name of school)	Grades Attended	Lived At home	Transportation Mode	One-Way Travel Time (Record in minutes)

b) If boarded-out from home, how far away were you from home? (Record in miles)

c) If boarded-out from home, did you like it? Yes ______ No ______

Why? (Probe)

27. Which school courses did you like the most? (up to two courses)

Which? Why?

28. What other things did you like about school? (Don't read, check up to three)

_______ learning

_______ friends

_______ sports

_______ extra-curricular activities

_______ field trips

_______ teachers

Others (specify) ____

____

____

29. Were there courses you disliked in school?

Yes _______ No ________

Which? ________________________ Why? ________________________

________________________ ________________________

________________________ ________________________

30. What other things did you dislike about school?
(Don't read, check first three)

_______ busing

_______ homework

_______ school work

_______ being there all day

_______ everything

_______ teachers

_______ discipline

_______ being away from home

______ pressure from friends

______ no extra-curricular activities

______ couldn't see the point of going to school

Others (specify) ________________________________

____

____

31. How were you doing in school? (grades, explain - better than most kids etc.)

Well ________ Average ________ Poor ________

32. Could you tell me what your marks were like in your best subject?

Subject ________________________ Grade ________

33. Could you tell me what your marks were like in your worst subject?

Subject ________________________ Grade ________

34. Were there any courses (subjects) which you would have like to take but were not offered at your school?

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) What are they? (Check first three)

________ vocational education

________ business education

________ clerical training

________ computer skills

________ life skills programs

________ career counselling

________ more natural sciences

________ more social sciences

________ local history, culture content

Others (specify) ________________________________

____

____

35. What are the characteristics of an effective teacher?
(Probe: characteristics - code first three)

_________ understands children

_________ interested in children

_________ fairness

_________ helps children

_________ explains things clearly

_________ cares

_________ positive attitude

Others (specify) ____

____

____

36. What do you think are the characteristics of an ineffective (bad) teacher?
(Probe: characteristics - code first three)

_________ ignores poor students

_________ doesn't care

_________ doesn't talk to children

_________ urges good students only

_________ doesn't present material well

_________ just wants to get through the material

Others (specify) ____

____

____

____

37. Were you involved in other school activities outside of normal classes? (extra-curricular)

Yes ________ No ________

IF YES, WHAT?

________ sports

________ music

________ student council

________ student paper

________ year book

________ clubs

________ theatre

Other (specify)

____

____

____

IF NO, WHY NOT?

________ not interested

________ lived too far (busing)

________ friends wouldn't approve

________ worked after school

________ parents wouldn't allow

________ don't know

Other (specify)

____

____

____

38. How did you get along with your teachers? (give choices)

(Definition: good - got along no trouble, liked them
fair - a bit of trouble, some were not okay
poor - didn't like most, often in trouble)

Good ________ Fair ________ Poor ________

39. How did you get along with your parents?

Good ________ Fair ________ Poor ________

40. How did you get along with other students?

Good ________ Fair ________ Poor ________

41. How many friends did you have at school: many, some, a few or none?

Many ________ Some ________ Few ________ None ________

42. Do you feel you were picked on at school by any of the teachers, administrators or other students?

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) By whom? ____

Why? ____

____

____

43. Do you think the discipline in your school was fair?

Yes ________ No ________

(If no) Why not? ____

____

____

44. If I asked your teachers if you worked hard in school, what do you think most would say?

Yes ________ No ________

45. If I asked your teachers if you were co-operative in school, what do you think most would say?

Yes ________ No ________

46. If I asked your teachers if you did well in your courses (subjects) at school, what do you think most would say?

Yes ________ No ________

47. If I were to ask your principal if you were a discipline problem in the school (spent a lot of time in his office) would he say ....

Yes ________ No ________

48. If I asked your teachers about your attendance, which would most say?

________ You attended regularly (seldom missed except for illness)

________ You missed a bit (missed one to two days per month)

________ You missed a lot (missed more than two days per month)

PART IV: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We are now at the last set of questions, which deal with you and your family.

49. How old are you? ____________

Sex: Male __________ Female ____________

50. What is the first language you spoke? ________________________________

Which language do you speak at home? ________________________________

51. Which of the following are you?

Native __________

Other (specify) ____

52. At the time you left school, who were you living with? (Read all, check one)

Mother and Father __________

Grandparents __________

Mother only __________

Father only __________

Foster parents __________

Other guardians __________

Independent __________

53. What is your Father's occupation? _____________________________________

Mother's occupation? ____

54. What is your Father's education level? _________________________________

Your Mother's? ______________________

55. Have any of your brothers or sisters dropped out of school?

Yes _________ No __________

56. When you were in school did you have problems with the law?
(Exclude traffic - don't probe or specify)

Yes _________ No __________

57. Which of the following categories contains your yearly income from working? Please don't count unemployment insurance or other income outside of work.

Income

$0 - 4,999 __________

5,000 - 9,999 __________

10,000 - 14,999 __________

15,000 - 19,999 __________

20,000 - 29,999 __________

30,000 or higher __________

THANK RESPONDENT FOR HIS TIME AND HELP.

APPENDIX A.3

QUESTIONNAIRE

SCHOOL STAYERS AND HIGH-RISK STUDENTS

Introduce yourself:

I am working on a job for the Alberta government. We are studying why some students leave school early (before graduation) and why other students remain in school.

The purpose of the study is to recommend practical measures to reduce the number of early school leavers.

I am now going to ask you some questions concerning your time in school. There are no right or wrong answers; we just want to find out your ideas and opinions. If you don't understand a question or want it repeated, I will gladly do that.

I want you to know that all your answers will be kept confidential. Your answers won't be shown to anyone in the school or in government. Students' answers will be summarized into a report and then destroyed. Are you ready?

Student Classification (High-Risk or Stayer______________________________

I.D. Number______________________

Interviewer_____________________________________

School Name_____________________________________

Grade_____________________________

PART I: INFORMATION ABOUT SCHOOL

The first set of questions deal with your time in school.

1. a) Please tell me the location of each of the schools you attended. What grades did you attend at this school?

Were you living at home or did you board away from home?

How did you travel to this school and how long did it take to travel one-way?

School Location (Not name of school)	Grades Attended	Lived At Home	Transportation Mode	One-Way Travel Time (Record in Minutes)

b) If boarded-out from home, how far away were you from home? (Record in miles)

____

c) If boarded-out from home, did you like it? Yes ______ No ______

Why? __________

2. Which school course do you like the most? (Maximum two courses)

Course? __________ Why? __________

3. What other things do you like about school? (Don't read, check up to three)

_______ learning

_______ friends

_______ sports

_______ extra-curricular activities

_______ field trips

_______ teachers

Others (specify) ______________________________

____

____

4. Are there courses you dislike in school?

Yes _______ No _______

Which? ______________________________ Why? ______________________________

______________________________ ______________________________

______________________________ ______________________________

5. What other things do you dislike about school?
(Don't read, check first three)

_______ busing

_______ homework

_______ school work

_______ being there all day

_______ everything

_______ teachers

_______ discipline

_______ being away from home

_______ pressure from friends

_______ no extra-curricular activities

_______ couldn't see the point of going to school

Others (specify) ______________________________

____

____

6. How do you feel you are doing in school?

Well __________ Average __________ Poor ____________

7. Could you tell me what your marks are in your best subject?

Subject ______________________________ Grade _____________

8. Could you tell me what your marks are in your worst subject?

Subject ______________________________ Grade _____________

9. Are there any courses (subjects) which you would like to take but are not offered at your school?

Yes __________ No _________

(If yes) What are they? (Check first three)

_______ vocational education

_______ business education

_______ clerical training

_______ computer skills

_______ life skills programs

_______ career counselling

_______ more natural sciences

_______ more social sciences

_______ local history, culture content

Others (specify) ____

____

10. What are the characteristics of an effective teacher?
(Probe: characteristics - code first three)

_______ understands children

_______ interested in children

_______ fairness

_______ helps children

_______ explains things clearly

_______ cares

_______ positive attitude

Others (specify) ____

____

11. What do you think are the characteristics of an ineffective (bad) teacher? (Probe: characteristics - code first three)

______ ignores poor students

______ doesn't care

______ doesn't talk to children

______ urges good students only

______ doesn't present material well

______ just wants to get through the material

Others (specify) ______________________________

____

12. Are you involved in other school activities outside of normal classes? (Extra-curricular)

Yes ______ No ______

IF YES, WHAT

______ sports

______ music

______ student council

______ student paper

______ year book

______ clubs

______ theatre

Others (specify)

____

____

____

IF NO, WHY NOT

______ not interested

______ lived too far (busing)

______ friends wouldn't approve

______ worked after school

______ parents wouldn't allow

______ don't know

Others (specify)

____

____

____

13. What changes do you feel would make school more interesting and helpful for you? (Check first three)

________ more relevant course work

________ better teachers

________ smaller classes

________ school closer to home

________ more extra-curricular activities

________ better counselling at school (to encourage staying)

________ better career counselling (value of education)

________ better home life

________ parents more forceful and encouraging

Others (specify) ____

____

____

14. How do you get along with your teachers?

(Definition: good - get along, no trouble, like them
fair - a bit of trouble, some aren't okay
poor - don't like most, often in trouble

Good ________ Fair __________ Poor __________

15. How do you get along with your parents?

Good ________ Fair __________ Poor __________

16. How do you get along with other students?

Good ________ Fair __________ Poor __________

17. How many friends do you have at school: many, some, a few, or none?

Many __________ Some __________ Few __________ None __________

18. Do you feel you are treated fairly at school by any of the teachers, administrators, or other students?

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) By Whom? ____

Why? ____

____

____

19. Do you think the discipline in your school is fair?

Yes ________ No ________

(If no) Why not? ____

____

20. If I asked your teachers if you work hard in school, what do you think most would say?

Yes ________ No ________

22. If I asked your teachers if you do well in your courses (subjects) at school, what do you think most would say?

Yes ________ No ________

23. If I were to ask the principal if you are a discipline problem in the school (spend a lot of time in his office) what would he say?

Yes ________ No ________

24. If I were to ask your teachers about your attendance which would they say?

_______ You attend regularly (seldom missed except for illness)

_______ You miss a bit (missed one to two days per month)

_______ You miss a lot (missed more than two days per month)

PART II: LEAVING SCHOOL

25. Have you ever considered leaving school before Grade 12 graduation?

Yes _______ No ________

(If no) go to Question 29

(If yes) Ask:

a) When did you last think about this? (Record months) __________

b) Why were you thinking of leaving? (Don't read, check first four)

_________ poor grades

_________ wanted vocational education

_________ family problems/no home encouragement

_________ in trouble out of school

_________ peer pressure

_________ wanted to earn money

_________ problems with teachers and administrators

_________ emotional problems

_________ schools too far (long bus ride)

_________ not interested in course work (hate school)

_________ have to board out (leave home/no school)

Others (specify) ______________________________

____

____

26. Did you talk to any of the following people about leaving school?
(Probe: understand is same as empathize)

i) Counsellor? Yes ______ No ______

(If yes) Did he (she) understand? Yes ______ No ______

ii) Your teachers? Yes ______ No ______

(If yes) Did he (she) understand? Yes ______ No ______

iii) Principal or Vice-Principal? Yes ______ No ______

(If yes) Did he (she) understand? Yes ______ No ______

iv) Your parents? Yes ______ No ______

(If yes) Did he (she) understand? Yes ______ No ______

v) Your friends? Yes ______ No ______

(If yes) Did he (she) understand? Yes ______ No ______

vi) Other? Yes ______ No ______

(If yes) Did he (she) understand? Yes ______ No ______

Did he (she) encourage you to stay? Yes ______ No ______

27. What made you decide to stay in school?
(Don't read, check first three)

______ don't know

______ friends (peer pressure)

______ wanted to graduate

______ got interested in school

______ not old enough to quit

______ realized needed schooling

______ couldn't get a job

______ teachers and administrators got better

______ started getting along at home

Others (specify) ______________________________

____

____

28. Have things changed now or do you think you may still decide to leave school early?

Stay in _________ Leave __________ Don't know ___________

29. Have any of your friends left school?

Yes ______ No _______

(If yes) Most of them __________

Half of them __________

A few of them _________

30. In your opinion, how important is a high school completion in getting a job?

Very important ___________

Somewhat important _______

Not important ____________

31. In your opinion, who do you think is most responsible for students dropping out of school? (Read all responses - rate the top 2 as 1 & 2)

the school leavers themselves ________

their friends _________

parents _________

teachers _________

administrators ________

the community _________

Others (specify) ____

____

____

____

32. Please rate how important the following factors are to students leaving school. Tell me if you think they are very important, somewhat important or not important.

	VI	SI	NI
distance of school from home	____	____	____
need for income	____	____	____
peer pressure	____	____	____
not interested	____	____	____
poor grades	____	____	____
desire to start work	____	____	____
the course work is not relevant to job needs	____	____	____
the school atmosphere	____	____	____
students' home life	____	____	____
school facilities	____	____	____
teaching approaches	____	____	____
lack of parent encouragement	____	____	____
social factors, like alcohol and drug use, pregnancy	____	____	____
Others (specify) ____________________	____	____	____
____________________	____	____	____
____________________	____	____	____

PART III: WORK

33. Do you have a part-time job while going to school?

Yes ______ No ______

34. I'd like to ask you some questions about what you expect to be doing in the future. Do you expect to be working five years from now?

Yes ______ No ______

(If yes) What type of work would you like to be doing? (Check one only)

______ farming

______ clerical

______ technical vocational

______ professional

______ sales

______ construction (labour)

______ service occupation (clerk, gas jockey, etc.)

______ don't know

______ Other (specify) ______________________________

____

____

(If no) What do you expect to be doing? (Check one only)

______ housewife

______ unemployed

______ going to school

______ travelling

______ don't know

PART IV: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

We are now at the last set of questions, which deal with you and your family.

35. How old are you? ________

Sex: Male ________ Female ________

36. What is the first language you spoke? ____________________

Which language do you speak at home? ____________________

37. Which of the following best describes your ethnic background? (Read all)

Native ________

Other (specify) ____

38. Are you presently living with your: (read all, check one only)

Mother and Father ________

Grandparents ________

Mother only ________

Father only ________

Foster parents ________

Other guardians ________

Independent ________

39. What is your Father's occupation? ______________________________________

Mother's occupation? ____

40. What is the last grade obtained by your Father? _________________________

Your Mother? ____________________

41. Have any of your brothers or sisters dropped out of school?

Yes ________ No ________

APPENDIX A.4

QUESTIONNAIRE

PARENTS

Introduce yourself.

I am working on a job for the Alberta government. We are studying why some students leave school early (before graduation) and why other students remain in school.

The purpose of the study is to try to find out why some children chose to drop out of school before completing their Grade 12. To do this we are talking to students who have left school early, children still in school, teachers and parents. This co-operation will help us to recommend practical measures which school boards and government can introduce to help students stay in school longer.

I am now going to ask you some questions concerning your children in school. There are no right or wrong answers; we just want to find out your ideas and opinions. If you don't understand a question or want it repeated, I will gladly do that.

I want you to know that all your answers will be kept confidential. Your answers won't be shown to anyone in the school or in government. Parents' answers will be summarized into a report and then destroyed. Are you ready?

Location of interview______________________________

I.D. #____________________________

Interviewer_______________________

Respondent: Male______________ Female____________

Approximate Age:________________

1. How many of your children have left school before completing Grade 12?

____

2. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective teacher? (Probe: characteristics - code first three)

________ understands children

________ interested in children

________ fairness

________ helps children

________ explains things clearly

________ cares

________ positive attitude

Others (specify) ______________________________

____

____

____

3. What do you think are the characteristics of an ineffective (bad) teacher? (Probe: code first three)

________ ignores poor students

________ doesn't care

________ doesn't talk to children

________ urges good students only

________ doesn't present material well

________ just wants to get through the material

Others (specify) ______________________________

____

____

____

4. Are there any courses (subjects) which are not offered at your school which you feel potential school leavers would like to take?

Yes ______ No ______

(If yes) What are they? (Check up to three)

__________ vocational education

__________ business education

__________ clerical training

__________ computer skills

__________ life skill programs

__________ career counselling

__________ more natural sciences

__________ more social sciences

__________ local history, culture content

Other (specify) ______________________________

____

5. What are the good things happening in the school system?
What things do you like about school for your children? (Probe, check up to three)

__________ administration

__________ teachers

__________ counselling

__________ busing

__________ curriculum

__________ discipline

__________ extra-curricular activities

__________ size of school

__________ parent involvement

__________ community involvement

Others (specify) ______________________________

____

____

Why? ______________________________

____

____

6. What things about the school system could be improved to make it more helpful for children? (Probe: check up to three)

_________ administration

_________ teachers

_________ counselling

_________ busing

_________ curriculum

_________ discipline

_________ extra-curricular activities

_________ size of school

_________ parent involvement

_________ community involvement

Others (specify) ____

____

____

Why? ____

____

____

7. In your opinion, how important is high school completion in getting a job?

Very Important _________

Somewhat Important _________

Not Important _________

8. In your opinion, who do you think is most responsible for students leaving school? (Read all responses: rate the top 2 as 1 & 2)

School leavers themselves ________ Administrators ________

Friends ________ The Community ________

Parents ________ Potential employers ________

Teachers ________

Others (specify) ____

____

____

9. Please rate how important the following factors are to the students leaving school. Tell me if you think they are very important, somewhat important or not important.

	VI	SI	NI
Distance of school from home	____	____	____
Need for income	____	____	____
Peer pressure	____	____	____
Not interested	____	____	____
Poor grades	____	____	____
Desire to start work	____	____	____
The course work is not relevant to job needs	____	____	____
The school atmosphere	____	____	____
Students' home life	____	____	____
School facilities	____	____	____
Teaching approaches	____	____	____
Lack of parent encouragement	____	____	____
Social factors like alcohol and drug use, pregnancy	____	____	____

Others (specify) ____

____

6. What things about the school system could be improved to make it more helpful for children? (Probe: check up to three)

________ administration

________ teachers

________ counselling

________ busing

________ curriculum

________ discipline

________ extra-curricular activities

________ size of school

________ parent involvement

________ community involvement

Others (specify) ________________________________

____

____

Why? ________________________________

____

____

7. In your opinion, how important is high school completion in getting a job?

Very Important ________

Somewhat Important ________

Not Important ________

8. In your opinion, who do you think is most responsible for students leaving school? (Read all responses: rate the top 2 as 1 & 2)

School leavers themselves ________

Friends ________

Parents ________

Teachers ________

Administrators ________

The Community ________

Potential employers ________

Others (specify) ____

____

____

9. Please rate how important the following factors are to the students leaving school. Tell me if you think they are very important, somewhat important or not important.

	VI	SI	NI
Distance of school from home			
Need for income			
Peer pressure			
Not interested			
Poor grades			
Desire to start work			
The course work is not relevant to job needs			
The school atmosphere			
Students' home life			
School facilities			
Teaching approaches			
Lack of parent encouragement			
Social factors like alcohol and drug use, pregnancy			

Others (specify) ____

____

Now I would like to ask you some questions about your children who left school.
(Select one child - the last one who left school)

10. Did he(she) have many friends in school?

Many ________ Some ________ A few ________ None ________

11. Did he(she) get along with his(her) teachers?

Usually ________ Seldom ________ Other ________

(If seldom) Why do you think he(she) didn't?

____

____

12. How did he(she) do in school course work (subjects)?

Good ________ Fair ________ Poor ________

13. What did you say to your son(daughter) when they first talked to you about leaving school?

____

____

____

14. a) How did you feel about your son(daughter) leaving school?
(Probe: approve, understand, sad, etc.)

____

____

____

b) Looking back what could you have done to keep him(her) in school longer?

____

____

____

c) Looking back what could the school system have done to keep him/her in school longer?

____

____

____

15. When he (she) decided to leave school, did anyone from the school contact you?

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) What happened? Did you feel satisfied with this?

____

____

____

16.a) Did anyone at th[illegible]ool try to help your child stay in school?

Yes ________ No ________

b) Who?
i) ______________________________________
ii) ______________________________________
iii) ______________________________________

c) What did each of these do?
i) ______________________________________
ii) ______________________________________
iii) ______________________________________

17. Do you think anything else could have been done to persuade him (her) to stay in school?

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) What? ______________________________________

By whom? ______________________________________

____

18. How would you describe your relationship with the school?

Good ________ Fair ________ Poor ________

23.a) Do you think the size of the school (e.g. large composite, medium size, smaller rural) has an impact on student dropout rates?

Yes _______ No _______

Explain ______________________________

____

____

b) Can smaller schools utilizing unconventional models such as C.V.C.s influence students to remain in school?

Yes _______ No _______

Explain ______________________________

____

____

24.a) Do you think mobile education facilities and mobile teachers (e.g. laboratories, vocational education etc.) might have a positive impact on student retention?

Yes _______ No _______

Explain ______________________________

____

____

b) How about more education by correspondence?

Yes _______ No _______

Explain ______________________________

____

____

25.a) Describe the impact of boarding out and long bus rides on student retention.

____

____

____

____

b) How could this be improved upon (other arrangements made) that might have a positive impact on student retention?

____

____

____

____

26. What would you say are the two most important things that could have been done which would have kept your child in school? By whom?

i) ____

____

____

ii) ____

____

____

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

(Parent's sex: Male ________ Female __________)

27. What language do you normally speak at home?

____

28. Which of the following best describes your ethnic background? (read all)

Native _________

Other (specify) ____

29. Which of the following best describes your marital status at the time your child left school?

Married (or common law) _________

Divorced or separated _________

Widowed _________

Single _________

30. How many children were living at home when he (she) dropped out? _________

31. Could you tell me the highest grade completed by each of your children, starting with the oldest? Is that child still in school?

Highest grade completed	Still in School	
	Yes	No
____________________	___	___
____________________	___	___
____________________	___	___
____________________	___	___
____________________	___	___
____________________	___	___
____________________	___	___
____________________	___	___

32. What was the highest grade you completed in school?
(Record beside appropriate parent)

____

Your spouse? ______________________

33. What is your occupation? (Record beside appropriate parent)

____

Your spouse? ____________________________________

APPENDIX A.5

TEACHERS, COUNSELLORS, ADMINISTRATORS

LOCATION (SCHOOL) ____________________

I.D. = ____________________

ROLE OF PERSON BEING INTERVIEWED ____________________

INTERVIEWER ____________________

1. What do you think are the typical characteristics of the early school leaver? (Do not read, check first five)

_______ poor grades

_______ ethnic minority

_______ low-income home

_______ poor home life

_______ family doesn't value education

_______ low intelligence

_______ is usually male

_______ has emotional problems

_______ is a discipline problem

_______ poor attendance

_______ is not interested in school

_______ lack of ambition

_______ gets into trouble with the law

_______ low self-esteem

_______ has friends who influence him negatively

Others (specify) ____________________

____

____

2. Are there any characteristic differences, such as mentioned above, between male and female school leavers?

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) What?

i) ____

ii) ____

iii) ____

3. On average, how do leavers compare in achievement to stayers. Are they

Underachievers ____________

Overachievers ____________

Achievers at expected level ______________

4.a) What are the reasons for students leaving school early?
(Read both a) and b) and explain difference before answers)
(Check first five)

________ poor grades

________ want vocational education

________ poor home life (family problems/no home encouragement)

________ delinquent behaviour (out of school)

________ peer pressure

________ wants to earn money

________ problems with teachers and administrators

________ emotional problems

________ school too far (long bus ride)

________ not interested in the course work (hates school)

________ have to board out (leave home/no school)

Others (specify) ____

____

____

b) What are the reasons that students give for leaving school?
(Check maximum of two)

________ want to work

________ would fail anyway

________ bored with school

________ want to take vocational education

________ financial

Others (specify) ____

____

____

5. a) At what grade level do the characteristics of an "at risk" leaver become identifiable?

____

b) What are these characteristics at this stage?
(Don't read - check first three)

________ low grades

________ failed grades

________ easily distracted or bored

________ poor attendance

________ negative peer pressure

________ lacks interest in school work and learning

________ no involvement in school activities

________ becomes a discipline problem

________ has emotional problems

________ low self-esteem

________ little family encouragement

Others (specify) ____

____

____

6. Please indicate in the following statements, the amount of your agreement or disagreement.

1. Strongly agree
2. Agree
3. Don't agree
4. Disagree
5. Strongly disagree

a. The solution of the drop-out problem is the responsibility of the community through the school and other community agencies ______

b. Children who show little interest in their school work should be told they have the wrong attitude ______

c. I would like to have a class of many potential school drop-outs if I could conduct it as I wished ______

d. Youngsters who come from the "wrong side of the tracks" make me uncomfortable ______

e. A good way to explain rules to a class is to make examples of those who often misbehave ______

f. Students need the experience of failure in the classroom as an introduction to the problems of adult life ______

g. A drop-out has no one but himself to blame for his inadequate education ______

h. Grades should be partly determined by a child's attitude towards the teacher ______

i. In an average class of 30 pupils there will be four difficult behaviour problems ______

j. About 60 percent of high school students are not respectful towards their teachers ______

7. In your opinion, what are the characteristics of an effective teacher? (Do not read, code first three)

__________ empathize with students

__________ broad-minded

__________ patient

__________ treats children as equals

_______ knows subject area

_______ is well organized

_______ cares about the job

_______ explains things clearly

Other (specify) ____

____

____

8. What do you think the characteristics of an ineffective teacher are? (Do not read, code first three)

_______ not concerned with children

_______ doesn't know material

_______ doesn't present material well

_______ not organized

_______ imposes personal values

_______ can't properly discipline

_______ no compassion

_______ not interested in the job

_______ impatient

Others (specify) ____

____

____

9. In your opinion, what are special and unique characteristics of an effective teacher in northern Alberta?

i) ____

ii) ____

iii) ____

iv) ____

v) ____

10. Did you receive any preparation or special training for teaching in northern Alberta?

Yes _______ No ________

(If yes) What and who provided this?

____

____

____

____

11. What could be done to better prepare teachers and counsellors for their work in northern Alberta schools? Who should provide this help?

____

____

____

____

____

____

12. In your opinion, who do you think is most responsible for students leaving school? (Read all responses - rate the top 2 as 1 & 2)

the school leavers themselves _________

their friends __________

parents __________

teachers __________

administrators __________

the community __________

potential employers _______

Others (specify) ____

____

13. Do you feel the dropout problem is a significant problem in your school district?

Yes ________ No ________

Why? ____

____

____

14. What types of things could be done at the school level to reduce the rate of early school leavers?

i) ____

ii) ____

iii) ____

iv) ____

v) ____

15. What could be done outside of the school system to reduce the dropout rate?

i) ____

ii) ____

iii) ____

iv) ____

v) ____

16. Are there any courses, subjects which are not offered at your school which you feel potential school leavers would like to take? (Write down the specifics of these broad categories as applicable)

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) What are they? (Check maximum of three)

________ vocational education

________ business education

________ computer skills

________ clerical training

________ life skill programs

________ career counselling

________ more natural sciences

________ more social sciences

________ local history, culture content

Others (specify) ____

____

17. What else do you think can be done to make school more interesting to potential dropouts?

i) ____

ii) ____

iii) ____

iv) ____

18. What do you think is an acceptable dropout rate in your school district?

	High School	Junior High	Elementary
zero			
less than 5%			
6 to 10%			
11 to 15%			
16 to 20%			

Higher ________ (Specify) ________________________________%

19. Does your school have set procedures to follow when a student is identified as a potential dropout?

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) What are these procedures?
(If no) Could you suggest a procedure?.

____

____

____

20.a) What do you personally do when a student tells you he is thinking of leaving school?

____

____

____

b) What things could be done in your community to reduce the dropout rate?

i) ____

ii) ____

iii) ____

iv) ____

v) ____

21. If you could do any one thing to reduce dropout rates, what would it be?

____

____

____

22.a) Are there any programs available to your students that make them aware of the value of education and expose them to the options available to them with further education?

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) Describe ____

____

____

b) Discuss the effectiveness of the program __________________________

____

____

____

c) Do you attempt to approach this with your students?

Yes _______ No _______

(If yes) How? ____

____

____

(If no) Why not? ____

____

____

(IF NO TO Q.23.a)

d) Do you think such programs, if presented to all students, would be effective in significantly reducing the dropout rate in your school?

Yes _______ No _______

e) At what grade levels would you suggest this type of program begin?

____

f) Discuss how you view the contents and presentation of this type of program.

____

____

____

____

23.a) Is there any parent/community involvement in your school?

Yes ________ No ________

Specify: ____

____

____

____

b) Does this involvement in any way relate to the school dropout situation?

Yes _______ No _______

(If yes) How? ____

____

(If no) Why not? ____

____

c) Do you think more parent/community involvement with the school would help to reduce the dropout rate?

Yes _______ No _______

(If yes) Explain the potential type of involvement _______________

____

____

(If no) Why not? ____

____

____

24.a) Do you think the size of the school (e.g. large composite, medium size, smaller rural) has an impact on student dropout rates?

Yes _______ No _______

Explain ____

____

____

b) Can smaller schools utilizing unconventional models such as C.V.C.'s influence students to remain in school?

Yes _______ No _______

Explain ____

____

____

25.a) Do you think mobile education facilities and mobile teachers (e.g. laboratories, vocational education etc.) might have a positive impact on student retention?

Yes _______ No ________

Explain ____

____

____

____

b) How about more education by correspondence?

Yes _______ No ________

Explain ____

____

____

____

ASK ONLY OF RURAL SCHOOLS

26.a) Describe the impact of boarding out and long bus rides on student retention.

____

____

____

____

b) How could this be improved upon (other arrangements made) that might have a positive impact on student retention?

____

____

____

____

BACKGROUND

27. How many years in total have you worked as an educator?

____

28. How many years have you worked in a school system in northern Alberta?

____

29. Do you plan to be working in a school system in northern Alberta five years from now?

Yes _______ No ________

Why? ____

____

____

30. What is your age? ____________

Sex: Male _________ Female __________

31. How many children do you have? ___________

32. Which of the following best describes your ethnic background?

Native _________

Other (specify) ____

(QUESTIONS 33 TO 41: ASK ONLY OF ADMINISTRATORS AT SCHOOL LEVEL)

33. What types of programs are available at your school?
(Read and check - specify subjects if noteworthy)

_________ academic

_________ vocational

_________ diploma

_________ life skills

_________ business education

Other (specify) ____

____

____

34. In your opinion, to what extent has the curriculum at your school been adapted to the local culture. The choices are significantly, moderately, and very little.

health S______M______L______

language arts (reading, literature) S______M______L______

social studies (history) S______M______L______

second languages S______M______L______

options S______M______L______

science S______M______L______

arts and crafts S______M______L______

35. What types of vocational or industrial arts courses are available at your school? Since when?

____

____

____

(If vocational programs are offered) At what grade level can students take these programs?

____

____

____

____

36. What types of remedial and special programs are offered at your school?

____

____

____

____

37. Does your school offer or have access to any of the following?

	Yes	No
counsellors	____	____
life skill courses	____	____
on-the-job work experience	____	____
mobile education facilities/laboratories	____	____
mobile teacher specialist teams	____	____
field programs	____	____
correspondence courses	____	____
career counselling	____	____
computer training facilities	____	____
theatre/arts	____	____
other high technology facilities and programs (If yes) specify:	____	____

____

38. What types of extra-curricular activities are available at your school?

____

____

39.a) Do all students have an opportunity to participate in these?

Yes _______ No _______

(If no) What prevents these students from participating?

____

____

b) Is there any degree of parent involvement in school extra-curricular activities?

Yes _______ No _______

Describe ____

____

____

40. About what percentage of the students in the school come from the following ethnic background?

Native ________ %

Other _________ %

Specify other significant minority __________%

41. If you had a choice, what is the one thing you would implement this year to reduce the school dropout rate?

a) That is relatively inexpensive ($25,000.00)

____

____

____

b) That is expensive ($25,000.00+)

____

____

____

APPENDIX A.6

QUESTIONNAIRE

LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES

LOCAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARDS

Introduce yourself.

I am working on a job for the Alberta government. We are studying why some students leave school early (before graduation) and why other students remain in school.

The purpose of the study is to try to find out why some children chose to drop out of school before completing their Grade 12. To do this we are talking to students who have left school early, children still in school, teachers and parents. This co-operation will help us to recommend practical measures which school boards and the government can introduce to help students stay in school longer.

I am now going to ask you some questions concerning your group's feelings about the issue. There are no right or wrong answers; we just want to find out your ideas and opinions. If you don't understand a question or want it repeated, I will gladly do that.

I want you to know that all your answers will be kept confidential. Your answers won't be shown to anyone in the school or in government. Your answers will be summarized into a report and then destroyed. Are you ready?

Name of Organization ____

Location of Interview ____

I.D. # ______________________

Interviewer ______________________________

1. Does your organization (or you) have contact with the school children in your community?

Yes ________ No ________

(If yes) What involvement do you have? ________________________________

____

____

2. In your opinion, what makes an effective teacher? (Probe: characteristics - code first three)

________ understands children

________ interested in children

________ fairness

________ helps children

________ explains things clearly

________ cares

________ positive attitude

Others (specify) ____

____

____

3. What do you think are the characteristics of an ineffective (bad) teacher? (Probe: characteristics - code first three)

________ ignores poor students

________ doesn't care

________ doesn't talk to children

________ urges good students only

________ doesn't present material well

________ just wants to get through the material

Others (specify) ____

____

____

4. Are there any courses (subjects) which are not offered at your school which you feel potential school leavers would like to take? (Write down the specifics of these broad categories as applicable)

Yes _______ No _______

(If yes) What are they? (Check up to three)

_______ vocational education

_______ business education

_______ computer skills

_______ clerical training

_______ life skill programs

_______ career counselling

_______ more natural sciences

_______ more social sciences

_______ local history, culture content

Others (specify) ____

____

____

5. What are the good things happening in the school system? What things do you like about this school for your children?

(Note: write specific comments) (Check up to three)

_______ administration

_______ teachers

_______ counselling

_______ busing

_______ curriculum

_______ discipline

_______ extra-curricular activities

_______ parent involvement

_______ community involvement

_______ size of school

Others (specify) ____

____

Why? ____

____

6. What things about the school system could be improved to make it more helpful for children? (Probe) (Check up to three)

__________ administration

__________ teachers

__________ counselling

__________ busing

__________ curriculum

__________ discipline

__________ extra-curricular activities

__________ size of school

__________ parent involvement

__________ community involvement

Others (specify) ____

____

____

Why? ____

____

____

7. In your opinion, how important is high school completion in getting a job?

Very Important _______

Somewhat Important _______

Not Important _______

8. In your opinion, who do you think is most responsible for students leaving school? (Read all responses: rate the top 2 as 1 & 2)

the school leavers themselves ________

their friends ________

parents ________

teachers ________

administrators________

the community ________

potential employers _______

Others (specify) ____

____

9. Please rate how important the following factors are to the students leaving school. Tell me if you think they are very important, somewhat important or not important.

	VI	SI	NI
distance of school from home			
need for income			
peer pressure			
not interested			
poor grades			
desire to start work			
the course work is not relevant to job needs			
the school atmosphere			
students home life			
school facilities			
teaching approaches			
lack of parent encouragement			
social factors like alcohol and drug use, pregnancy			
Others (specify) ________________			

10. Do you feel the dropout problem is a significant problem in your school district? Why?

Yes ________ No ________

Why? ____

____

____

____

11. What do you think are the typical characteristics of the school leaver in your community? (Do not read, check first five)

_______ poor grades

_______ ethnic minority

_______ low income home

_______ poor home life

_______ family does not value education

_______ low intelligence

_______ is usually male

_______ has emotional problems

_______ is a discipline problem

_______ poor attendance

_______ is not interested

_______ lack of ambition

_______ gets in trouble with the law

_______ low self-esteem

_______ has friends who influence him negatively

Others (specify) ____

____

____

12. What are the key concerns in your community about early school leavers?

i) ____________________

ii) ____________________

iii) ____________________

iv) ____________________

v) ____________________

13. What things could and should be done in your community to reduce the dropout rate? (Note comments)

i) ____________________

ii) ____________________

iii) ____________________

iv) ____________________

v) ____________________

14. What do you think is the single most important thing that could be done that would have the greatest impact in reducing the dropout rate in your community?

____

____

____

15.a) Should your organization be more involved with the school?

Yes ______ No ______

(If yes) How? ____________________

____

(If no) Why not? ____________________

____

b) (If yes) How would this involvement have an effect on early school leavers in your area?

____

____

16.a) Are parents, as individuals, in your community involved with the school?

Yes ______ No ______

Describe ____________________

____

b) Describe how you think this may influence children staying in school

____

____

____

c) What type of additional parent involvement would help lessen dropout rates?

____

____

____

17.a) Do you think the size of the school (e.g. large composite, medium size, smaller rural) has an impact on student dropout rates?

Yes ______ No ______

Explain ____________________

____

____

____

b) Can smaller schools utilizing unconventional models such as C.V.C.'s influence students to remain in school?

Yes ______ No ______

Explain ____________________

____

____

____

18.a) Do you think mobile education facilities and mobile teachers (e.g. laboratories, vocational education etc.) might have a positive impact on student retention?

Yes ________ No ________

Explain ____

____

____

____

b) How about more education by correspondence?

Yes ________ No ________

Explain ____

____

____

____

19.a) Describe the impact of boarding out and long bus rides on student retention.

____

____

____

____

b) How could this be improved upon (other arrangements made) that might have a positive impact on student retention?

____

____

____

____

Appendix B:

Literature Review

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

The literature review of the early school leaver phenomenon is organized into three sections. The first of these describes the factors which have been correlated with leaving school prior to graduation. The results of this are summarized into a profile of the high risk student and school leaver. The second section describes the research on factors surrounding the decision to leave school. The final section discusses mitigative or remedial measures directed to reducing the incidence of early school leaving.

Early school leaving is a concern to educators, government and society as a whole. The reasons for this concern include the following:

- rapid technological advances. Unskilled and semi-skilled jobs are decreasing in number while highly skilled jobs are hard to fill. Unemployment among young dropouts is high.
- increased disparities between racial minorities and other members of society. Equality of opportunities becomes more difficult to believe.
- social costs. The costs of foregone income, foregone revenue to the government and social welfare costs attributable to students leaving school prior to graduation are high.
- inflation of educational credentials. A grade 12 diploma is now used as a screening device for many manual jobs.
- the increasing urbanization of society. Social mobility and economic survival require an education and an understanding of social conventions which school provides.
- the moral obligation of schools to educate students applies to all students.

The literature review provided below gives an overview of some of the key research findings on the early school leaving phenomenon. It is not intended to be comprehensive as it excludes some areas on which there is little solid evidence, such as the effects of busing, boarding away from home, and the community environment on the rate of early school leaving.

American and Australian studies are reported in addition to Canadian studies as the subject area has been more extensively researched in these locations and relatively few Canadian studies exist. An area which is excluded is policy issues, such as:

- is high school graduation needed by everyone? Why? What is an acceptable dropout rate?
- what are the consequences of increasing the retention rates? Inflation of paper credentials? Lowering of standards?
- do school administrators want to re-order priorities to potential leavers, perhaps putting more emphasis on them than on good students?
- how important is the "pushout" factor to the incidence of early school leaving?
- from where will the money come for expensive dropout prevention programs?

2.0 FACTORS CORRELATED WITH EARLY SCHOOL LEAVING

2.1 Extent of the Problem

Recent statistics on the extent of early school leaving in Alberta and Canada are difficult to come by. In order to provide some information on the order of magnitude of early school leaving, available statistics from past studies will be summarized for Alberta, other parts of Canada, and the U.S. The rationale for providing statistics for areas outside of Alberta is to place the extent of the northern Alberta early school leaver phenomenon in perspective, when information on this becomes available.

In reviewing the studies below, large discrepancies in statistics on the dropout rate for an area are apparent. This points out a problem which has not received a great deal of attention in research on early school leavers: how the dropout rate should be measured. Definitions used to calculate this rate vary. Some rates do not include those students who leave school in the summer months; some ignore transfer students, which can be a problem in times of high migration; sometimes the rate is based on high school students while other times it is based on Grades 1 to 12 (i.e. different percentage bases); some rates do not account for the extra years it may take a student to graduate, and so on. This lack of clarity is compounded by the many researchers who do not detail their definition for calculating the dropout rate, but rather gloss over it.

In an unpublished master's thesis, Scragg (1968) estimated the extent of early school leaving in Alberta. The study was a longitudinal study of all Grade 9 students in Alberta in 1963. In 1968, a total of 38.9 per cent of these students had graduated from high school Of the remaining students, 71 per cent had left school and 29 per cent were still in high school. If it is assumed that all those students remaining in school in 1968 do in fact graduate, up to 40 per cent of the 1963 Grade 9 students could have left school prior to graduation.

A study of high school leavers in the St. Paul region of Alberta (Yackulic (1976)) funded by Alberta Education estimated a dropout rate of 8.3 per cent. while a masters thesis by Penner (1970) estimated a rate of 8.8 per cent for

Valleyview schools. The reliability of the estimate in the former study is questionable due to the study methodology and problems encountered in the course of the project. Dumont (1971) notes that in 1969, the percentage of enrolled students leaving school prior to graduation was 3.65 per cent in Alberta cities, 3.83 per cent in rural Alberta and 4.23 per cent in the High Prairie School Division.

The distribution of early school leavers is not equal among all Alberta races. Native students have a proportionately higher rate. As part of a 1971 study of Indian early school leavers in the Northland School Division, McCarthy (1971) estimated progressive dropout rates of native students who were in Grade 5, 6 and 7 for the school year 1963-64. All students completed Grade 5. At the conclusion of Grade 9, a total of 53 per cent of the sample had left school. This increased to 77.5 per cent at the Grade 10 level and to 96.7 per cent in Grade 12. In another study, Saigaonkai (1975) estimated that of Indian students in Alberta who started Grade 1 in 1963-64, 80 per cent had left school by the 1974-75 school year.

Estimates of the dropout rate in the early 1970s provided in other studies are: 6 per cent in Vancouver, 9 per cent in Scarborough, North York and Hamilton, 12 per cent in Durham-Northumberland (Young and Reich (1974)). These estimates are on the conservative side as they are not likely to not include summer dropout rates. The Toronto Board of Education estimated that approximately one-quarter of its secondary school population leaves school prior to graduation (Young and Reich (1974)).

Estimating the extent of the early school leaving phenomenon has obtained more attention in the U.S. than in Canada. The dropout rate in the U.S. has been documented as declining over time. In 1900, only 10% of high school students graduated. Cervantes (1965) estimated that the U.S. national dropout rate was between 30 per cent and 40 per cent in the early 1960s. In 1970, about 70 per cent of students entering the 5th grade remained in school until high school graduation, with this proportion increasing to 78 per cent of students in 1977 (Jones (1977)). Recent evidence reported by the American

Association of School Administrators (1979) indicates that the trend toward an increasing proportion of students graduating from high school may have stabilized or even reversed.

In the U.S., dropout rates are not uniform across all parts of society. The dropout rate in schools in urban areas averages about 50 per cent, the rates among different races vary significantly, with Indians experiencing a dropout rate double the national average; and the rates are higher in the South than in the North (LeBrasseur and Freark (1982), Cervantes (1965)).

2.2 Socio-demographic status

The focus of much of the literature on early school leavers is on how the student's socio-demographic background is correlated to the decision to remain in school or leave prior to graduation. All the research reviewed indicates this is one of the most important correlates to early school leaving, and in fact many researchers feel the student's family situation is the most important predictor of the phenomenon.

The student from a family with lower socio-economic status is more likely to leave school before graduation. This holds true whether socio-economic status is measured in terms of family income or father's occupation - the occupation's level of difficulty, responsibility and prestige (see Bachman, Green and Wirtamen (1972), Tseng (1972), Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978), Kaplan and Luck (1977), Jones (1977), Poole (1978), Watson (1976). An article by Kaplan and Luck (1977) discusses at length how the physical circumstances of poverty (for example, crowded homes and lack of educational toys and materials) and the psychological aspects of poverty (for example, loss of self-esteem and alienation) contribute to difficulties in school.

School leaving is related to the educational level of the students' parents. Schreiber (1967) estimates that 70 per cent of the mothers and 80 per cent of the fathers of the dropout population have never finished school, and low educational levels of the dropout's parents are confirmed in the research by Poole (1978), Tseng (1972), and Curley (1971). Perhaps because of this, most early school leavers' parents have low educational aspirations and job aspirations for their children, and in turn the students have low occupational aspirations (Bachman, Green and Wirtamen (1972), Tseng (1972), Poole (1978)).

The "family tradition" relationship to early school leaving often holds true for the leaver's brothers and sisters. Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) report that the leaver is likely to have one or more siblings who dropped out of school.

Broken homes, where the parents are divorced or separated, or one or both of the parents are dead have a higher incidence of early school leaving. This has been reported by Cervantes (1965), Howard and Anderson (1978), Jones (1977) and Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978).

The typical school dropout does not feel close to his father, and the father's attitude toward the student is one of avoidance and little show of acceptance(Tseng (1972), Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978)).

Ethnic minorities are greatly over-represented among early school leavers. Although this has been shown by Zamanzadeh and Prince to be the case for non-English, non-Canadian born students, the overwhelming example in Canada is with Native students. Research discussed above shows that as large a proportion as 80 per cent to 97 per cent of natives leave school prior to graduation.

Most research shows that the dropout rate among males is only slightly higher than among females (see Kaplan and Luck (1977), Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978), Watson (1976), Annis and Watson (1975), Young and Reich (1974)). The ages at which students usually leave school are 16, 17 and 18 years old. The dropout incidence increases if the student is older than his classmates, and male students tend to leave at an older age than female students.

Very little work has been done on the effect of community characteristics on the dropout rate. Kaplan and Luck (1977) report on a study that shows small rural and large urban schools have a higher dropout rate than mid-sized schools in mid-sized communities.

2.3 Personality characteristics

Two major themes describe the research on the personality characteristics of the early school leaver: alienation and low self-esteem. Alienation in the leaver can be manifested in two forms: psychological alienation where the individual perceives himself as non-belonging and his situation as hopeless, and sociological alienation where the individual feels hostility to society and the school system in particular. Theories of the dropout as an alienated individual are associated with Schreiber (1967) and Reich and Young (1975). Factors such as failure in school, discrimination against minority students and difficulties with the middle class values of school can result in psychological alienation early in a student's school life. This alienation can result in low self-esteem and hostility, and in discipline problems.

Studies on the personality characteristics of early school leavers usually find a correlation with low self-esteem, even when controls are made for socio-economic status (Sewell, Palmo and Manni (1981), Combs and Cooley (1968), Bachman, Green and Wirtamen (1972), Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978)). Exception to these findings are studies by Tseng (1972) and Poole (1978) which found no differences between the self-esteem of leavers and stayers.

Lower achievement motivation among early school leavers has been found by Tseng (1972), Richter and Scandrette (1971) and Poole (1978). These findings held true after samples were controlled for IQ, socio-economic status and sex of the student. Other studies have found the following differences between leaver and stayer: lower emotional maturity and stability, lower reliability, greater degree of introversion, more impulsiveness and less concern for others. Combs and Cooley (1968), however, found more leadership qualities among the school leavers.

2.4 Attendance

Student absenteeism can be classed according to five categories (Sharples et al (1979)):

- illness, where the child is too ill to attend;
- parental withdrawal, where parents want the child to stay home for such reasons as needing help from the child;
- truancy, where the child is absent without good cause and without parental approval;
- the tacit approval of parents, where the parents do not insist on the child attending school;
- school phobia, where the child experiences extreme anxiety toward attending school.

Research on truancy shows it to be a manifestation of a number of factors, including a general dissatisfaction with school and its relevance, "the natural stresses of adolescence", difficulties in the home and with parents, the student-teacher relationship and the location of the school vis-a-vis opportunities for such things as wandering the streets.

Sharples et al (1979) concluded that research on absenteeism suggests that "the attitude of the parent is one of the single most important factors affecting persistent unjustified absenteeism from school, and ranks ahead of truancy, school phobia, and related psychosomatic factors".

As part of their study on school attendance patterns, these authors conducted a survey of 15 representative secondary schools across Ontario, examining the relationship between early school leaving and absenteeism. In 14 of the 15 schools, the mean number of days absent for early school leavers was higher than for stayers; however, the standard deviation for the former group was larger than that for the latter group and the overlap between the two groups was considerable. Thus, it could not be concluded that poor attendance was related to early school leaving.

These results contradict most other research on the correlation between early school leaving and absenteeism. Cervantes (1965) interviewed a sample of 200 leavers and stayers, matched on sex, age, IQ, school and socio-economic background. Based on this research, he determined that irregular attendance and frequent tardiness are common characteristics among high risk and potential dropouts, and in fact high rates of absenteeism are one of the best predictors of early school leaving.

An examination of the early school leaving problem among high school Inuit students in Frobisher Bay led Nash (1978) to conclude that absenteeism is an indicator of potential dropout among these students. Support of this relationship is provided by Schreiber (1967), Minkler (1980), Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978).

Curriculum type has been shown to be related to student absenteeism. Streaming, a system used in Quebec to channel students into a slow, average, or enriched "track" in high school was determined by Crespo and Michelena (1981) to be the major factor accounting for number of absences. The study methodology which controlled for IQ, age, academic performance and type of school, produced results that show slower stream students had a higher number of absences than students in the enriched stream.

A reason for the high rate of absenteeism among Native children was postulated in a discussion paper by the Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (1972). One of the key reasons for absenteeism is the Native child's responsibility to his family, which takes precedence over school. Familial responsibility results in the child remaining home to help with babysitting and other chores.

2.5 Academic standing

It has been determined that dropping out of school is correlated to academic achievement in that a significant proportion of early school leavers have been retained for one or more grades and many leavers are underachievers.

An Australian study of early school leavers by Poole (1978), using a sample of leavers and stayers matched for IQ, socioeconomic status and sex, showed major differences between the two groups in their level of school achievement in humanities, science, math, vocational and trade areas, commercial and art and crafts subjects. Leavers were proportionately over-represented in the bottom quartile of class and under-represented in the higher quartiles.

Substantial research has determined that early school leavers have serious academic problems that result in grade failure. Schreiber (1964) estimated that 50 per cent of early school leavers have been retained in a grade at least once, and if a student fails Grade 1 or 2, there is an 80 per cent chance he will not graduate. Curley (1971) reports that leavers are five times more likely to have failed a grade than stayers, while Cervantes (1965) estimates that 85 per cent of leavers are behind one year and 53 per cent are behind two or more years. In a study of 2,000 students across the United States Bachman, Green and Wirtamen (1972) estimate a 40 per cent dropout rate among those who have failed a grade, compared to a 10 per cent rate among students who have not failed any grades.

In determining elementary school predictors of high school dropouts, Stroup and Robins (1972) used a stepwise multiple regression to show that the most important predicators of early school leaving are the student's school performance (school failures), continuity in the same school, and family atmosphere. Other important predictors included truancy, early drinking and parental social status. IQ level was not found to be a significant predictor.

Canadian studies in this area provide similar conclusions, although the specifics vary. Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) studied the early school leaving syndrome in two Montreal high schools located in a middle income area and a high income area. They found that 59 per cent of early school leavers, versus 17 per cent of stayers, had failed two or more subjects in high school. Forty-five per cent of leavers failed one or more elementary school grades and 80 per cent failed one or more years in their school career.

The Toronto Board of Education study (Young and Reich (1974)) corroborates the result that poor academic performance is a good predictor of early school leaving. Early school leavers were over one year behind stayers on the number of credits obtained and their grade point averages were just at the passing level.

A study of the problem in a small northern Ontario town, by Annis and Watson (1975) showed a significantly higher leaving rate among students with failing grades than among honors students (30 per cent versus 3 per cent). The Nash (1978) study also points to slipping grades as an indicator of potential early school leaving.

Academic achievement in math and reading have been noted as being of paramount importance. Howard and Anderson (1978) report that one in four leavers admit to having trouble with reading and spelling; the average leaver is two years behind in reading ability, and math difficulties are also common. Cervantes' (1965) table of dropout characteristics describes the typical leaver as being two years behind in reading or math at the grade seven level, while another study noted in ERIC/CUE (1980) reports that close to 100 per cent of Grade 9 students who were below grade level on standardized math and reading tests by a combination of seven or more years dropped out of school.

2.6 Intelligence

The intellectual capabilities of early school leavers, as measured by IQ levels, has been a subject of some debate among researchers. The primary issue is whether early school leavers have significantly different intellectual capabilities than stayers. A lower intellectual ability as characteristic of the dropout has been documented by a number of researchers, as noted in literature reviews in Poole (1978) and Sewell, Palmo and Manni (1981).

Other studies cast doubt on this contention. A survey of early school leavers in seven randomly selected communities conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor in the mid 1960s showed the following IQ distribution among leavers and graduates.

	IQ 84 and[1] under	IQ 85 to 89	IQ 90 to 109	IQ 110 plus	Total
Graduate	10%	11%	63%	16%	100%
School Leaver	31%	15%	48%	6%	100%

Source: Voss, Wendling and Elliott (1966)

Based on their large, representative sample of U.S. students Bachman, Green and Wirtamen (1972) found differences in IQ small; about five IQ points separated early school leavers from graduates who did not go to college.

Sewell, Palmo and Manni (1981) conducted a study of IQ levels among high school leavers from lower socio-economic classes. The mean IQ of leavers was lower than that of the general population; however, an undetermined number of leavers "were capable of average or above average performance academically". The authors conclude that "the discrepancy between the intellectual potential and the poor achievement among dropouts suggests that .... factors other than IQ such as achievement motivation, social class influence, and the institutional impact of the school must be further explored".

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[1] *IQ of 85 and under signifies the student has difficulties in completing school; IQ of 85 to 89 is a slow learner; IQ of 90 to 109 is the normal range; and IQ of 110 plus signifies the ability to complete university.*

In their analysis of the relationship between IQ and early school leaving Voss, Wendling and Elliott (1966) emphasize that leavers are not a homogeneous group, and many are capable of doing satisfactory work in school. They report that students with limited intellectual ability often leave school prior to entering high school. The more capable early school leavers tend to remain in school longer. In cautioning against generalizations, the authors note that many early school leavers do not earn poor grades, have not failed in school and are good readers.

2.7 Curriculum

There is evidence that the general, non-academic high school curriculum is associated with a higher rate of early school leaving than either vocational or academic curriculums. This is substantiated by research by Young and Reich (1974), Schreiber (1964), Combs and Cooley (1968), Crespo and Michelena (1981) and Annis and Watson (1975). The highest retention rates are found among students enrolled in academic, college/university preparatory courses. Even after controlling for such factors as intelligence, age, academic performance and recorded absences, the extent of early school leaving is highest among students in general, non-academic programs. For those students not suited to an academic course, a vocational course is preferable, based on retention rates.

An interesting study by Thornburg (1975) examined how attitudinal factors can be used in conjunction with curriculum. The study involved 154 high school students in a rural Arizona school who were rated as high risk leavers. About one-third of these students were placed in a special academic program which featured a concentration on increasing the self-esteem of students and developing a positive attitude through high levels of positive reinforcement. The other high risk students were placed in a vocational program. A control group was established, matched to the high risk students on the basis of socio-economic class. The results were dropout rates of 18.6 per cent of students in the vocational group, 12 per cent of students in the control group, and a lower rate of 9.2 per cent of students in the special academic program.

Attitudinal factors in curriculum are also felt to be of importance by LeBrasseur and Freark (1982), who write that American Indians believe that their language, history and values should be reflected in the school curriculum as this would increase the self-esteem of Indian students and result in a lower rate of early school leaving.

Research by Thornburg (1975) questioned students on their attitudes toward curriculum. Half the students surveyed felt much of the required curriculum did not make sense and they were not learning the sorts of things they wanted to learn. The students felt they had to keep reading and studying the same things over and over in school.

2.8 Teachers and school administrators

The attitudes of teachers and school administrators can influence a student's decision on whether or not to leave school before graduation. Elliott, Voss and Wendling (1966) state that the attitudes and actions of teachers are of greater significance in the student's decision than the presence or absence of parental support for continuing in school. Hunt and Clawson (1975) concur with this, emphasizing that the attitudes of white, middle-class teachers toward ethnic minorities can exacerbate the dropout rate among these students. If teachers regard ethnic minority students as not possessing the intellectual capabilities and character traits required to succeed in school, these students' self esteem will be lowered and they are likely to be underachievers.

The necessary characteristics for teachers working with high risk students are committment, understanding of the problem, caring for the student and a positive attitude toward the student, according to Zeller (1966).

A number of interesting studies have been done on the attitudes and perceptions of students toward their teachers. Thornburg (1975) documents the results of interviews with Indian, Mexican-American and culturally deprived Anglo and black students. Approximately 60 per cent of the surveyed groups felt teachers expect too much of students, and about 75 per cent of students felt teachers always seem to like some pupils better than others. Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) queried students in two Montreal high schools on their attitudes toward school administrators and teachers. The early school leavers experienced more difficulties with school personnel than stayers, and these difficulties occurred at an earlier age for the dropout. Specifically the study found that 63 per cent of early school leavers began having difficulties with their teachers in elementary school, compared to 12 per cent of stayers. These percentages rose to 88 per cent of leavers and 15 per cent of stayers in high school. The vast majority of early school leavers (98 per cent) were critical of the way in which they were handled by their school administration, while only 15 per cent of stayers were critical of this. Most early school leavers wanted more attention, care and understanding from school personnel.

2.9 The peer group

Cervantes (1965) cited peer group pressures as an important determinant in a student's decision to remain in school or leave school, reporting many students feel it is "intolerable to be different". In his study, 200 early school leavers and graduates were asked about their probable reaction to parental opposition to their friends. Over half of the early school leavers replied they would ignore their parents and retain their friends, while most graduates, on the other hand, would reject their friends. Cervantes specified the following common characteristics among potential and actual dropouts: friends are not approved by parents; friends are not school-oriented; friends are often much older or much younger than the student.

Research conducted by Elliott, Voss and Wendling (1966) on the effects of social milieu and status deprivation focuses on some of the reasons why capable students leave school early. If peer group demands for dress and material goods cannot be matched, feelings of inadequacy may result and can increase the likelihood of early school leaving. The authors postulate that association with other dropouts is a more important factor in the decision to leave school early than is home support for education, since "for individuals who face status deprivation, association with dropouts provides a solution to an immediate problem, while lack of parental support for education does not". They conclude that the probability of dropping out is maximized if the high risk student has significant contact with other early school leavers and there is a lack of educational support from home.

Results of interviews conducted in the Toronto Board of Education study by Young and Reich (1974) concur with the above findings on peer group support of the school leaving decision. The study revealed that most early school leavers had the support of their peer group for their decision to leave.

2.10 Extracurricular activities

A comparison of participation rates in extracurricular activities between high school dropouts and non-dropouts was undertaken by Bell (1967). The study took place in the mid 1960s with students in 71 Kansas high schools. A total of 212 early school leavers were matched to 212 stayers on the basis of sex and grade level. Significant differences were found to exist between the two groups. A total of 68 per cent of the early school leavers did not participate in any extracurricular activities, compared to just 4 per cent of school stayers. Male early school leavers were much less likely to participate in these activities than the female leavers (18 per cent participation rate versus 54 per cent participation rate). The activities referred to here are those sponsored by the schools.

Corroborating evidence on the low rates of participation in extracurricular activities by early school leavers is provided by Cervantes (1965), Howard and Anderson (1978) and Young and Reich (1974).

A reason for this low degree of participation in extracurricular activities is advanced by Hunt and Clawson (1975), who report that the costs associated with participation in these activities are high. This cost factor could preclude students in the lower socio-economic classes from participation. The authors note, furthermore, that two-thirds of poor children had a strong dislike for these activities.

2.11 Attitudes toward school

Of the 121 school leavers interviewed in a study of the early school leaving problem in Australia, Poole (1978) found most leavers had negative attitudes toward school. When queried about boredom at school, 35 per cent of leavers stated they were "bored and fed up with school", while only 22 per cent of stayers felt this way. Negative attitudes among U.S. early school leavers were also established. Thornburg (1975) notes that negative attitudes were especially strong with respect to irrelevant curriculum, being bored, teacher stress on grades, teacher prejudice and school restrictions.

Another study which asked leavers and stayers about their likes and dislikes about school was undertaken by Cervantes (1965). The early school leaver typically criticized the curriculum, the staff and school activities and liked either nothing about school or only extracurricular activities. On the other hand, graduates found few significant faults with school and expressed satisfaction with the curriculum, the staff and extracurricular activities.

Students in the City of Toronto's "Leaving School Early Program" (Larter and Eason (1978)) were interviewed on what they liked and disliked about school. These are students who have left the regular school system. Over half of the 392 students surveyed liked a particular course in school. Other factors liked were not mentioned with a high degree of frequency. The most common dislike about school was associated with teachers. Other responses mentioned frequently were dislike of a particular course or dislike of everything associated with school.

Students viewpoints of the positive and negative attributes of school did not differ markedly from that above in the Young and Reich (1974) report. The positive features of school were other students, general coursework, personal relationships with teachers and extracurricular activities. The negative features were felt to be teaching methods, rules and regulations, general coursework and personal relationships with teachers. Stayers differed significantly from early school leavers only on personal relationships with teachers, rules and regulations and teaching methods; as expected, stayers were more positive about these factors than early school leavers.

2.12 Alcohol and drug abuse

Research by Annis and Watson (1979) compared drug use by early school leavers and stayers in a small northern Ontario city. A questionnaire was administered to Grade 9 students querying their use of various drugs. A follow-up survey was conducted thirteen months later. Prior to leaving school, the future dropout student used more licit and illicit drugs than the stayer. The future dropout used more tobacco, alcohol, glue and solvent, opiates, speed and stimulants. In the follow-up research, the early school leaver used more tobacco, LSD and opiates than the stayer. The authors conclude that there was greater drug use among early school leavers than among students who remain in school, and "the trend toward greater drug use within the dropout group was evident and strong before dropping out occurred".

In a study of predictors of high school dropout among students in St. Louis, Stroup and Robins (1972) found early drinking was an important predictor, although it was not found to be one of the most important factors. Zamanzadeh and Prince (1978) found marijuana use among early school leavers was almost double that of stayers.

2.13 Profile of the early school leaver

Those factors which show the strongest relationship and are the most powerful predictors of the early school leaver are as follows:

- lower socio-economic background;
- early failure in school;
- academic underachievement and poor performance;
- high levels of absenteeism;

- low self-concept and achievement motivation;
- low family encouragement, especially with respect to educational and job aspirations;
- trouble with school authorities and discipline problems; and
- lack of participation in extracurricular activities.

3.0 THE DECISION AND CONSEQUENCES

3.1 The decision to leave school early

The reasons given by students for leaving school prior to graduation include:

- employment, where the student finds work more relevant than school;
- inability to achieve, which occurs when a student has poor grades and a lack of credits;
- peer group pressure, where most of the students' friends have left school;
- dislike of school; the student finds school boring and a waste of time, and he cannot get along with his teachers;
- rebellion against authority, including parents, school authority figures and the discipline and rules of school;
- marriage or pregnancy, especially in the case of female students; and
- other reasons, such as helping family in a time of financial need, language problems among recent immigrants, poor health.

Two studies which provide statistics on the distribution of early school leavers according to their reason for leaving school are summarized. Poole (1978) reported the following reasons in her study of 121 early school leavers:

- dislike of, or disinterest in school	33%
- irrelevance of schooling in terms of occupational plans	31%
- inability/unwillingness to cope with more schooling	19%
- financial problems	6%
- influence of friends	6%
- parental or school pressure to leave	5%

The Toronto Board of Education study on 544 dropouts in the early 1970s by Young and Reich (1974) revealed the following distribution of reasons among early school leavers:

- the classic dropout, who has poor attitudes towards school, poor attendance record and is failing subjects	23%
- work oriented dropout, who prefers work to school	53%

- homemaker dropout, who is oriented toward marriage and family	6%
- family supporter dropout, whose parents need his financial help	7%
- cultural isolate dropout, who has language problems and is generally a recent immigrant	2%
- intellectual elite, who feels the school system is irrelevant to his needs and has renounced the system	3%

It is interesting to note that Combs and Cooley (1968) assert that the early school leaver's reason for leaving school is usually not supported by his high school record or the opinion of his high school counsellor.

Parents were the major source of advice for early school leavers in their discussions with others on leaving school (Poole (1978), Larter and Eason (1978), Young and Reich (1974)). In over half of the cases, parents agreed with or did not oppose the student's decision. Approximately three-quarters of the early school leavers did not make use of school or community resources in their decision making.

In their longitudinal study involving 3,300 early school leavers across the U.S., Combs and Cooley (1968) found that 57 per cent of leavers regretted their decision to leave within four years. Young and Reich (1974), who surveyed leavers within a year of their decision to leave determined that about 50 per cent of the leavers had no regrets about their decision, 30 per cent were depressed and 20 per cent were frustrated and angry about their school experiences.

4.0 MITIGATIVE MEASURES

The literature on mitigative measures for reducing the incidence of early school leavers can be organized according to five sections:

- curriculum;
- staff;
- reducing absenteeism;
- special programs; and
- home and community involvement.

Each of these sections is discussed below. They are introduced by some general comments on the types of programs involved. These are taken from various sources, in particular Zeller (1966). A few examples of the programs are then provided. Many mitigative programs have little or no documentation of their results; those examples provided were selected, in part, because some indication of their effectiveness was available.

The sources for this section include: Schreiber (1967, 1964), Zeller (1966), Maurer (1982), Minkler (1980), American Association of School Administrators (1979), Howard (1972), Titone (1982) Thornburg (1975), Kaplan and Luck (1977).

An underlying theme runs through all these programs and is best summarized by S.M. Miller (see Schreiber (1967)): "the obligation is not on the people who are different, but is rather on the professional, to learn to deal with a wide variety of students."

4.1 Curriculum

Measures that can be initiated by the school system to reduce the extent of early school leaving include improving curriculum programs. Zeller (1966) suggests a number of ways of accomplishing this:

- ensure the curriculum meets the students' needs in the social, vocational, academic or remedial areas;
- stress reading, writing and communication skills;

- use small groups within the classroom to provide for more individual assistance;
- use innovative teaching techniques and devices;
- have grades incorporate individual progress, not simply a comparison with the rest of the class so students are not branded as failures;
- offer vocational programs at an earlier grade level;
- include instruction on adult concerns such as employment, marriage, budgeting, family responsibilities; and
- provide students with programs about the importance of education.

i) Project Stay, St. Louis, Missouri

The program was comprised of six components: work-study programs, more guidance counselling, continued education for pregnant students, social adjustment classes, instructional and curriculum changes and more extracurricular activities. The dropout rate decreased to less than one-half of its previous rate (49.8 per cent to 22.1 per cent) after one year.

ii) LIST, Conklin, New York

The project concentrates on determining the most successful learning style for students through testing on all high school students. Students and teachers are helped to communicate better and the student's most effective learning styles are matched to the teacher's presentation and materials. The dropout rate among potential dropouts fell from 21 per cent to 8 per cent in two years and the schools can identify potential dropouts accurately.

iii) Project DEEP, Wichita, Kansas

The project allows students to complete a project of their own design in an open classroom structure, and obtain academic credit for it. It is used for arts, social studies and science. Students are involved in setting the project's goals and evaluating their own and other students' projects. The absentee rate decreased by 30 per cent and the dropout rate by 37 per cent.

4.2 School staff

Zeller (1966) advises the use of the following techniques by administrative and teaching staff:

- have the most enthusiastic and eager teachers work with high risk students;
- focus on motivating pupil learning;
- use teachers who are child-oriented rather than course-oriented;
- staff at the school (faculty, office and custodial staff) should be child oriented and interested in the disadvantaged students;
- have sufficient counsellors and begin a counselling program for high risk students not later than Grade 7;
- help high risk students with acquiring social acceptability through special school activities;
- establish mandatory exit counselling for students leaving school; and
- counsel students who have left school recently.

i) Project Intercept, New York

The program, phased in over three years, incorporated four major strategies: voluntary intensive teacher/staff inservice training; alternative academic programs for high risk students; student training in social and interpersonal skills; and family intervention and parental training based on staff visits to the home. The results of the program were a dropout rate of half the original rate in the school and one-tenth of the rate experienced in the control group of similar students, and a reduction in the failure rate, absence rate and suspension rate.

ii) Program to Reduce Dropouts in Inner City Schools, Philadelphia, New Jersey

Six strategies for reducing the dropout rate among high risk students were used: staff development sessions to develop proper attitudes, techniques and devices for dealing with potential leavers; educational, vocational and personal counselling; school-home-community co-ordinators; parent involvement; encouragement of extracurricular activities for students; and involvement with community agencies, institutions and businesses. After one year there was a significant decrease in the dropout rate, improved attendance and reading and math scores and less disciplinary problems.

iii) Special Academic Program, Arizona

A special academic program using team teaching and concentration on developing a positive attitude toward school was set up for high risk students. The focus of the program was to enhance students self worth through positive reinforcement techniques. The dropout rate in this program was 9.2 per cent, compared to 18.6 per cent in a vocational program and 12 per cent in a control group.

4.3 Reducing absenteeism

A number of programs for reducing the rate of early school leaving approach the problem by focusing on improving the attendance of high risk students. According to Kaplan and Luck (1977), there are six basic methods for accomplishing this:

- enforce compulsory attendance, by increasing the number of truant officers, attendance teachers, home contact programs;
- institute remedial, vocational and work study programs;
- improve rapport among students, teachers, parents and school administration;
- provide guidance and counselling programs, for students with psychological, vocation and academic difficulties;
- co-ordinate the effort of schools and public welfare authorities; and
- encourage dropouts to return to school.

i) Project ARISE, in Macon County, Georgia

This program used home contact, where the parents of high risk students functioned as caseworkers, as a means of improving attendance. The project resulted in a 99.3 per cent decrease in the dropout rate, a 200 per cent decrease in disciplinary problems as measured by acts requiring discipline, and a 66 per cent increase in attendance.

ii) Detention Policy, Valley Center, Kansas

A policy on attendance enforcement through parent contact, make-up work and detentions for unexcused absences was instituted on a strict and consistent basis. The absentee rate decreased from 12 to 15 per cent to an average of 4.5 per cent three years later. The dropout rate decreased by 50 per cent.

iii) Attendance Procedures, San Francisco, California

Parents of hard core truant students met with school attendance supervisors and a probationary program agreed to by parents, students and teachers was set up. The student signed an education plan agreement with his parents and counsellor, agreeing to attend special classes and report daily to the attendance supervisor. School attendance percentages increased from 80 per cent to over 97 per cent within the first year of the program.

4.4 Special programs

A number of special programs to help the high risk student can be integrated into the established curriculum in such a manner that the student does not feel different or negatively labelled. These programs can run from preschool to high school. They include:

- preschool and nursery programs set up to orient the deprived child and help him adjust to the school years ahead;
- remedial reading and math programs at the elementary school and junior high school levels;
- establish work-study programs with local businessmen, closely supervised and starting at the Grade 9 level; and
- provide schooling for pregnant students.

i) Co-op Education Program, Delaware

High risk students spent half time at work and half in class. Prior to working, the student was given instruction on work attitudes, dress, safety and so on. On the job, they were closely supervised by the employer and regular teacher supervision at the workplace occurred. The school curriculum included special courses on the students' job interests. Although details are not provided, Delaware school officials say the dropout rate has been substantially reduced.

ii) Schooling for Teenage Mothers, Dayton, Ohio

Part-time teachers and course material are supplied to provide the opportunity to continue education. Also, health care services and counselling, and child care education are provided. The results are: more than twice as many girls return to school after giving birth; subsequent pregnancy rates are half that of the control group and the proportion of girls who become welfare cases are half that of the control group.

iii) Head Start Program, Alton, Illinois

The successful Head Start program for disadvantaged children provides preschool children with the basic skills necessary for school that they may not acquire in their homes. It includes field trips, storytelling, educational films and group play and games. Staff consists of both paid and volunteer personnel trained to work with both the parents and children.

4.5 Home and community involvement

Greater involvement by the student's parents, especially if they seem not to care or are fearful of the school, can be an effective tool in reducing the early school leaving problem. Community support and volunteer groups can provide help in implementing and supporting programs. This includes:

- provide parents with information on the student and programs;
- make the school a friendly, welcome place for parents to visit;
- involve parents in after-school and evening programs in which they can participate; develop adult education programs;
- use home-school co-ordinators that visit the home; and
- involve public welfare and health agencies, churches, the courts and volunteer organizations.

i) Pine Ridge Indian Reserve, Shannon, South Dakota

Seminars involve parents in the education of their children by making them aware of the curriculum, teachers, administration, funding and educational policy. Parents participate in school curriculum committees, extracurricular activities and establishing school policies. Programs are held for making teachers more sensitive to Indian needs, and teachers make home visits. The dropout rate has decreased from 80 per cent to about 14 per cent per year.

ii) Parents Program, Stockton, California

An adult education program was established to help less-educated parents understand the advantages of school, teach home-making skills and how to improve their home. Parents are invited to visit school classes and evaluate what students are taught in school.

iii) Community Volunteers

The National Congress of Parents and Teachers has noted the following school-related tasks which can be undertaken by community volunteers: keeping school attendance records; notifying parents of absent students; help develop and communicate information on school policies; help communicate information to parents on diverse school-related issues.

iv) Expulsion Reduction Program, Peoria, Illinois

When expulsion of a student was recommended, the principal notified the parents and a meeting was arranged. An agreement between the school, parents and students was signed that admits to the correctness of the charges, defines a probationary period in which the student must obey all school rules and provides a waiver of notice and hearing if the student breaks school rules during the probationary period. The expulsion rate dropped to one-third of its previous level.

4.6 Proposals for Native education

As the incidence of early school leaving is especially high among Native students in Alberta, the proposals advanced in the literature for combatting this are provided below (Association of Iroquois and Allied Indians (1972), Nash (1978), LeBrasseur and Freark(1982)).

- teachers should be knowledgeable and understanding of Natives and accept cultural differences. Parents of the students should choose the teachers. Native para-professionals can be used to help in the schools;
- students should attend kindergarten to Grade 9 on the reserve. Students then get the psychological and sociological support of the family and community;

- when secondary school students are bused to the school, extracurricular activities should be scheduled so they can participate;
- integration should be reciprocal, with non-Native students attending reserve schools, as well as Natives attending non-reserve schools;
- curriculum should include Native content, such as Native culture, history, literature and so on;
- a cultural and educational centre should be established to aid students in recognizing their background and educational interests; and
- guidance and counselling programs for Natives should be geared toward them.

4.7 Programs with poor results

Programs for high risk students that do not achieve lasting results, according to Kaplan and Luck (1977) are those which are classified as "crash programs", or short term programs which do not attack the source of the problem; media campaigns, which do not produce lasting effects; and special schools or classrooms, which can be seen by the student as punitive and fail to attack the causes of the student's behaviour. Other programs which do not provide the desired results are increasing the age of compulsory school attendance to 18 or 19 years old and focusing effort on getting the early school leaver to return to school - 50 to 75 per cent of these students drop out again (Schreiber (1967)).

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Appendix C:

Sample Characteristics

C.1 Leaver Forms by Sex, Grade and School District

C.2 Early School Leaver Interviews by School and District

C.3 Leaver Interviews by Age at Time of Interview

C.4 Leaver Interviews by Time Since Leaving School

C.5 School Stayer Interviews by District and School

C.6 High Risk Student Interviews by District and School

C.7 Parent Interviews by District and School

Appendix C.1

Leaver Forms by Sex, Grade, and School District

Grade District		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Leavers Total Number
Northland #61	Female	-	-	1	2	4	12	30	23	23	5	1	131
	Male	-	-	-	1	10	16	26	24	16	5	2	129
Ft.Vermilion #52	Female	-	-	1	5	6	6	12	20	25	19	6	140
		1	1	4	4	7	18	19	22	15	8	2	177
Spirit River #47	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	4	2	4	12
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	4	4	7	18	54	11	28
East Smoky #54	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	17	67	17	-	6
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	13	13	25	25	-	25	8
High Prairie #48	Female	-	-	-	-	-	5	6	11	27	31	20	111
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	2	11	15	20	32	18	134
Fairview #50	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	14	28	35	17	29
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	21	28	23	23	43
Peace River #10	Female	-	-	-	-	-	15	19	15	31	12	8	26
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	12	12	33	10	24	10	42
County of St. Paul #10	Female	-	-	-	-	-	11	11	44	11	11	-	9
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	5	-	14	14	23	41	22
St. Paul #2228	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	33	67	-	-	-	6
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	57	48	-	-	-	7
County of Athabasca #12	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	6	65	12	12	
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5	36	32	27	22
Lac La Biche #51	Female	-	-	-	-	-	2	3	20	25	28	21	99
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	6	7	26	23	16	23	89
Glen Avon P.S. #5	Female	-	-	-	-	-	11	22	67	-	-	-	9
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	22	67	-	11	-	9
Lakeland #5460	Female	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	2	29	31	35	128
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	5	30	28	32	172
Lakeland R.C. #150	Female	-	-	6	-	-	6	25	31	19	6	6	16
	Male	1	-	-	-	-	20	30	-	20	10	10	10
Grande Cache #5258	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	28	39	22	-	18
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	10	24	35	17	10	29
McLennan R.C. #3	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	-	-	-	1
Valleyview R.C. #84	Female	-	-	-	-	-	17	25	50	8	-	-	12
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	44	33	22	-	-	9

Continued...

Appendix C.1 (continued)

Leaver Forms by Sex, Grade and School District

Grade / District		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Leavers Total Number
Swan Hills #5109	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	30	30	40	10
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	44	44	11	9
Whitecourt #2736	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	40	27	27	45
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	2	10	6	30	32	18	50
St. Thomas More R.C.#35	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	40	60	-	5
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	27	46	9	11
Falher Cons. #69	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	100	-	-	1
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	83	-	75	17	12
St. Paul Regional #1	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	32	23	46	57
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	25	15	33	60
Fort McMurray R.C.#32	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	7	13	40	27	13	15
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	21	-	63	11	5	19
Cty.of Grande Prairie #1	Female	-	-	-	3	-	8	3	5	26	29	24	38
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	6	12	43	26	12	
Grande Prairie #2357	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	36	37	25	143
	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	24	35	17	27	161
Ft.McMurray #2833	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	9	35	40	13	71
	Male	-	-	-	1	1	4	7	12	37	26	7	76

Since the reporting by school district varied considerably data comparisons cannot be made. Some districts were thorough in their reporting and others were not. Some districts reported for schools to Grade 12; others primarily for junior high. The percentage will therefore have meaning for only the districts themselves.

Appendix C.2

Leaver Interviews by School and District

District	School	Number	Relative Frequency	(%)
Grande Prairie Public S.D.	Composite High	5	4.0	8.0
	Montrose Jr.	5	4.0	
Northland S.D.	Desmarais High	11	8.7	16.7
	Cadotte Lake (1-9)	5	4.0	
	Fox Lake (1-9)	2	1.6	
	Chipewyan Lakes (1-8)	3	2.4	
Fort Vermilion S.D.	Ft. Vermilion (1-12)	4	3.2	16.7
	La Crete (4-12)	14	11.1	
	Rainbow Lake (1-12)	3	2.4	
Lac La Biche S.D.	Lac La Biche Comp. High	23	18.3	19.9
	Plamondon (1-12)	2	1.6	
Fort McMurray Public S.D.	Composite High	21	16.7	19.1
	Birchwood Jr. High	3	2.4	
Lakeland S.D.	Cold Lake (1-12)	11	8.7	19.8
	Bonnyville Centralized High	14	11.1	
	TOTAL	126		

With the exception of the Grande Prairie School District, the interviews were fairly evenly split among the six districts. They are not evenly distributed among the schools. This reflects different degrees of preparedness at the school level and variances in the difficulty of finding people to be interviewed at different schools.

Appendix C. 3

Leaver Interviews By Age at Time of Interview

Age (Yrs.)	Number	Percentage
14 - 16	22	17.7
17	35	28.2
18 - 19	28	22.6
20 - 25	25	20.2
26	14	11.3

Appendix C. 4

Leaver Interviews By Time Since Leaving School

Months	Percent of Leavers
0 - 6	21
7 - 12	21
13 - 24	18
25 - 48	16
49+	23
	100%

Example: 21 per cent of leavers who were interviewed had been away from school less than six months.

Appendix C.5

School Stayer Interviews By District and School

District	School	Number	Relative Frequency	(%)
Grande Praire Public S.D.	Composite High	8	14	19
	Montrose Jr.High	3	5	
Northlands S.D.	Mistassiny	6	11	22
	Cadotte Lake (1-9)	1	2	
	Fox Lake (1-9)	3	5	
	Chipewyan Lakes (1-8)	2	4	
Ft.Vermilion S.D.	Ft. Vermilion (1-12)	1	2	13
	La Crete (4-12)	4	7	
	Rainbow Lake (1-12)	2	4	
Lac La Biche S.D.	Lac La Biche Comp. High	0	0	7
	Plamondon (1-12)	4	7	
Ft.McMurray Public S.D.	Composite High	0	0	13
	Birchwood Jr.High	1	2	
	Peter Pond Jr.High	6	11	
Lakeland S.D.	St. Dominique	5	9	27
	Bonnyville Centralized High	10	18	
	TOTAL	56		

Appendix C.6

High Risk Student Interviews By District and School

District	School	Number	Relative Frequency	(%)
Grande Prairie Public S.D.	Composite High	4	8.0	14.0
	Montrose Jr. High	3	6.0	
Northlands S.D.	Desmarais High	4	8.0	26.0
	Cadotte Lake (1-9)	4	8.0	
	Fox Lake (1-9)	2	4.0	
	Chipewyan Lakes (1-8)	3	6.0	
Fort Vermilion S.D.	Ft. Vermilion (1-12)	5	10.0	26.0
	La Crete (4-12)	5	10.0	
	Rainbow Lake (1-12)	3	6.0	
Lac La Biche S.D.	Lac La Biche Comp.High	2	4.0	4.0
	Plamondon (1-12)	-	-	
Fort McMurray Public S.D.	Composite High	1	2.0	16.0
	Birchwood Jr.High	4	8.0	
	Peter Pond Jr.High	3	6.0	
Lakeland S.D.	Cold Lake (1-12)	4	8.0	14.0
	Bonnyville Centralized High	3	6.0	
	TOTAL	50		

Appendix C.7

Interviews of Parents of Early School Leavers
By District and School

District	School	Number	Relative Frequency	(%)
Grande Prairie Public S.D.	Composite High	3	8.8	11.8
	Montrose Jr.High	1	2.9	
Northlands S.D.	Mistassiny High	2	5.9	17.6
	Cadotte Lake (1-9)	2	5.9	
	Fox Lake (1-9)	1	2.9	
	Chipewyan Lakes (1-8)	1	2.9	
Ft.Vermilion S.D.	Ft. Vermilion (1-12)	2	5.9	29.4
	La Crete (4-12)	3	8.9	
	Rainbow Lake (1-12)	5	14.7	
	Lac La Biche Comp.High	1	2.9	
	Plamondon (1-12)	2	5.9	
Ft.McMurray Public S.D.	Composite High	6		17.6
Lakeland S.D.	Cold Lake (1-12)	3	8.8	14.7
	Bonnyville Centralized High	2	5.9	
	TOTAL	34		

Appendix D:

Additional Analyses

D.1 Regression Analysis

D.2 Factor Analysis

APPENDIX D.1

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Background

Having acquired these data profiles of early school leavers, it is necessary to investigate whether or not there are any mathematical models which may describe the relationships between variables. In regression analysis, we attempt to find relationships of the form:

Last Grade Completed = coefficient x (I.Q.) + Constant

These relationships may be valuable if they account for a reasonable proportion of the variance of the data.

The types of variables amenable to this technique are variables with numerical values such as average busing time, I.Q. and so on. Variables for non-numeric information such as ethnic origin are not suitable for they cannot be interpreted.[1]

Three data files were merged for use in the regression analysis: the early school leaver profile forms submitted by the schools for each leaver in the past three years; school description data and community profile data. The rationales for selecting these files for the analysis are:

- a large number of cases (2,671 students) are available;
- they contain more usable variables (i.e. numerical variables) than the personal survey information from the early school leaver.

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[1] *A regression can be visualized as an attempt to draw a line between data points in a manner that best describes the relationship among the points. Non-numeric data does not lend itself to this, and although it is possible to use it, the interpretation of the results in a mathematical framework is tenuous (e.g. a coefficient of -0.8 attached to ethnic background does not indicate how it affects school leaving). Non-numeric data are best analyzed through descriptive statistics, such as cross-tabulations.*

Variables used were as follows:

a) Student Profile Variables

VAR 1 age at termination
" 2 achievement - reading
" 3 achievement - mathematics
" 4 achievement - composite
" 5 I.Q.
" 6 grades - language
" 7 grades - reading
" 8 grades - mathematics
" 9 last grade completed
" 10 attendance
" 11 year retained

b) School Profile Variables

VAR 12 1982-83 enrollment
" 13 number of credits offered
" 14 number of special programs
" 15 number of extracurricular activities
" 16 average busing time
" 17 number of counselling programs

c) Community Profile Variables

VAR 18 population
" 19 service levels of infrastructure
" 20 service levels of transportation

Procedure

For the purposes of this study, it was felt that the variables which could most usefully be modelled were Age at Termination and Last Grade Attended. That is, these variables are directly connected with the fact of early school leaving, while the other variables are more general.

Each of these two "dependent" variables was regressed against all the others in a "step-wise" manner. That is, variables are introduced into (and perhaps expelled) from the regression equation one by one until enough of the variance is explained. At that point, the best possible model has been obtained, and can be analyzed further.

It should be noted, that the school and community data (Variables 12 through 20) were in all cases perfectly intercorrelated, and thus are not documented in the following results.

First Regression: Dependent Variable: Age at Termination (VAR 1)

Step 1 First Variable in: Grade (Language) (VAR 6)

R-Square: 0.634

B : -0.0319

Constant: 17.541

Variable	Partial Correlation
VAR 2	0.091
VAR 3	-0.599
VAR 4	-0.510
VAR 5	0.054
VAR 7	-0.966
VAR 8	0.652
VAR 9	0.948
VAR 10	0.661
VAR 11	-0.720

Step 2 Next Variable in: Grades (Reading) (VAR 7)

R-Square: 0.976

	VAR 6	VAR 7
B:	-0.047	-0.112

Constant: 25.904

Variable	Partial Correlation
VAR 2	-0.900
VAR 3	0.289
VAR 4	-0.999
VAR 5	-0.512
VAR 8	0.973
VAR 9	0.048
VAR 10	0.868
VAR 11	-0.705

Step 3 Next Variable is: Achievement (Comprehensive) (VAR 4)

R-Square: 0.999

	VAR 6	VAR 7	VAR 4
B:	-0.046	-0.103	-0.018

Constant: 25.19

Variable	Partial Correlation
VAR 7	-1.0
VAR 3	-1.0
VAR 5	1.0
VAR 8	-1.0
VAR 9	-1.0
VAR 10	-1.0
VAR 11	1.0

At this point the process concludes.

Second Regression: Dependent Variable = Last Grade (VAR 9)

Step 1 First Variable in: Grades (Reading) (VAR 7)

R-Square: 0.862

B: -0.075

Constant: 15.459

Variable	Partial Correlation
VAR 1	0.834
VAR 2	0.602
VAR 3	0.990
VAR 4	-0.059
VAR 5	-0.075
VAR 6	-0.840
VAR 8	-0.085
VAR 10	0.128
VAR 11	-0.796

Step 2 Next Variable in: Achievement (Math) (VAR 3)

R-Square: 0.997

	VAR 7	VAR 3
B:	-0.109	0.042

Constant: 18.104

Variable	Partial Correlation
VAR 1	0.136
VAR 2	0.979
VAR 4	0.985
VAR 5	0.591
VAR 6	-0.397
VAR 8	-0.984
VAR 10	-0.926
VAR 11	0.976

Step 3 Next Variable in: Achievement (Comprehensive) (VAR 4)

R-Square: 0.999

	VAR 7	VAR 3	VAR 4
B:	-0.111	0.044	0.003

Constant: 18.296

Variable	Partial Correlation
VAR 1	1.0
VAR 2	-1.0
VAR 5	1.0
VAR 6	-1.0
VAR 8	-1.0
VAR 10	-1.0
VAR 11	1.0

Conclusions

The results of the regression analysis must be considered disappointing. Whereas the large R-square figures give one an ephemeral suggestion of a good fit, the large partial correlations in all cases quickly unmask the limitations of the computed models.

Both dependent variables, "Age at Termination", and "Last Grade Completed" have very small variances, e.g. most leavers were age 16 or 17. All the other variables were highly correlated with them.

The regression involves a near-classic example of multicollinearity, that is, the situation in which some or all of the independent variables are highly intercorrelated. The principal effect of this problem is that estimates of the regression coefficients vary wildly from sample to sample. Another way of looking at it would be to say that although the regression model fits the data well, other completely different models would also fit well.

APPENDIX D. 2

FACTOR ANALYSIS

Background

Another mathematical tool which is often useful in analyzing data of this sort is Factor Analysis. Whereas regression analysis tries to express one variable as a function of other variables, factor analysis seeks to reduce the set of variables to a set of fundamental variables or "factors" which adequately explain the variance. In this case, we might see much of the variance in the data atributable, in some broad way, to "intellectual" factors (I.Q., achievement, grades) and "environmental" factors (busing time, school enrollment).

Procedure

A classic Factor Analysis was attempted on the data. Once again, it was not possible to compute correlations with the school and community variables masquerading as individual attributes, so the analysis was performed on the eleven individual variables. The following initial calculations were produced:

Variable	Est Communality	Factor	Eigenvalue	Pct. of Var.	Cum. Pct.
Var 1	0.81552	1	5.77799	52.5	52.5
Var 2	0.75861	2	2.58764	23.5	76.1
Var 3	0.75401	3	1.30413	11.9	87.9
Var 4	0.81388	4	0.76242	6.9	94.8
Var 5	0.58088	5	0.56781	5.2	100.0
Var 6	0.81552	6	0.00000	0.0	100.0
Var 7	0.94338	7	0.00000	0.0	100.0
Var 8	0.76945	8	0.00000	0.0	100.0
Var 9	0.94504	9	-0.00000	-0.0	100.0
Var 10	0.98711	10	-0.00000	-0.0	100.0
Var 11	0.98711	11	-0.00000	-0.0	100.0

After first iteration communality of one or more variables exceeded 1.0
PA2 factoring cannot be done.

"Communality" in this sense is the proportion of the variable sharing something in common with other variables. The analysis stopped at this point because it was not possible to improve the estimates of these communalities.

Conclusions

The results of the factor analysis were disappointing. The initial factors were essentially chosen to correspond one-to-one with the variables, and it was not possible to reduce this number. A quick glance at the communality estimates shows us that once again, the high degree of dependence among the variables has thwarted useful analysis.

With data of this type, we would have to expect that sophisticated mathematical analyses will only occasionally prove useful. When using data culled from administrative files, the best analysis is still obtained by basic descriptive statistics backed up by insight and common sense.

Appendix E:

Proposed Monitoring System

APPENDIX E:

PROPOSED MONITORING SYSTEM

1. Alberta Education currently has a system in place which tracks approximately 100,000 students annually. That it includes all students from grade 9 up. The intention would be to take advantage of this existing system and extend it to include all students from grade 1 to grade 12 enrolled in Schools in Alberta.

2. Students would be assigned an I.D. number upon entering grade 1. This assignment would be on the same basis as is currently practiced.

3. For monitoring purposes the necessary information would include:
   - Student I.D. #
   - Name
   - Birthdate
   - School grade
   - Current school
   - Previous school
   - Transfer date

4. Student I.D. numbers would follow them for the duration of their school career. When a student leaves a school a report would have to be filled on the student leaving and sent to Alberta Education.

5. When students arrive in a school their I.D. numbers must accompany them. Out-of-province students would be assigned new I.D. numbers. A report of new I.D. numbers assigned would be sent in to Alberta Education.

6. Transfers out of province would have to be treated the way they are now. Information available from the student and his family saying they are leaving Alberta and/or requests for student information from out of province would be reported to identify a student as an out-of-province transfer.

7. Programs would be developed which would trace students leaving a particular school or district and also which would identify those students who drop out (are shown as leaving a school but do not show up at another).

8. As a future consideration it would be beneficial and desirable to interface this system with A.V.C.s and C.V.C.s. This would not be necessary until their 18 year age restriction is removed.

9. Tracking of students within the larger composite high schools would have to improve. In some cases considerable uncertainty exists about the enrollment status of some students.

10. For the tracking system to be of any use it must cover a very large geographical area, preferably the whole of the province.

11. The central data bank must be co-ordinated by Alberta Education. They would have to assume responsibility for programming information printouts, final design of the system, specific information formats, software development and teaching schools how to use the system.

12. There are alternative choices in the method of administration. These are:
    A) i) information at the district level
        or
       ii) information at the school level
    B) i) manual system using forms that are filled and returned on a regular basis
        or
       ii) computer interface system
        or
       iii) combination of i) and ii) geared towards eventual total computerization

C) i) reporting on a monthly basis

or

ii) reporting five times a school year

or

iii) reporting three or four times a year (three should be the absolute minimum).